THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

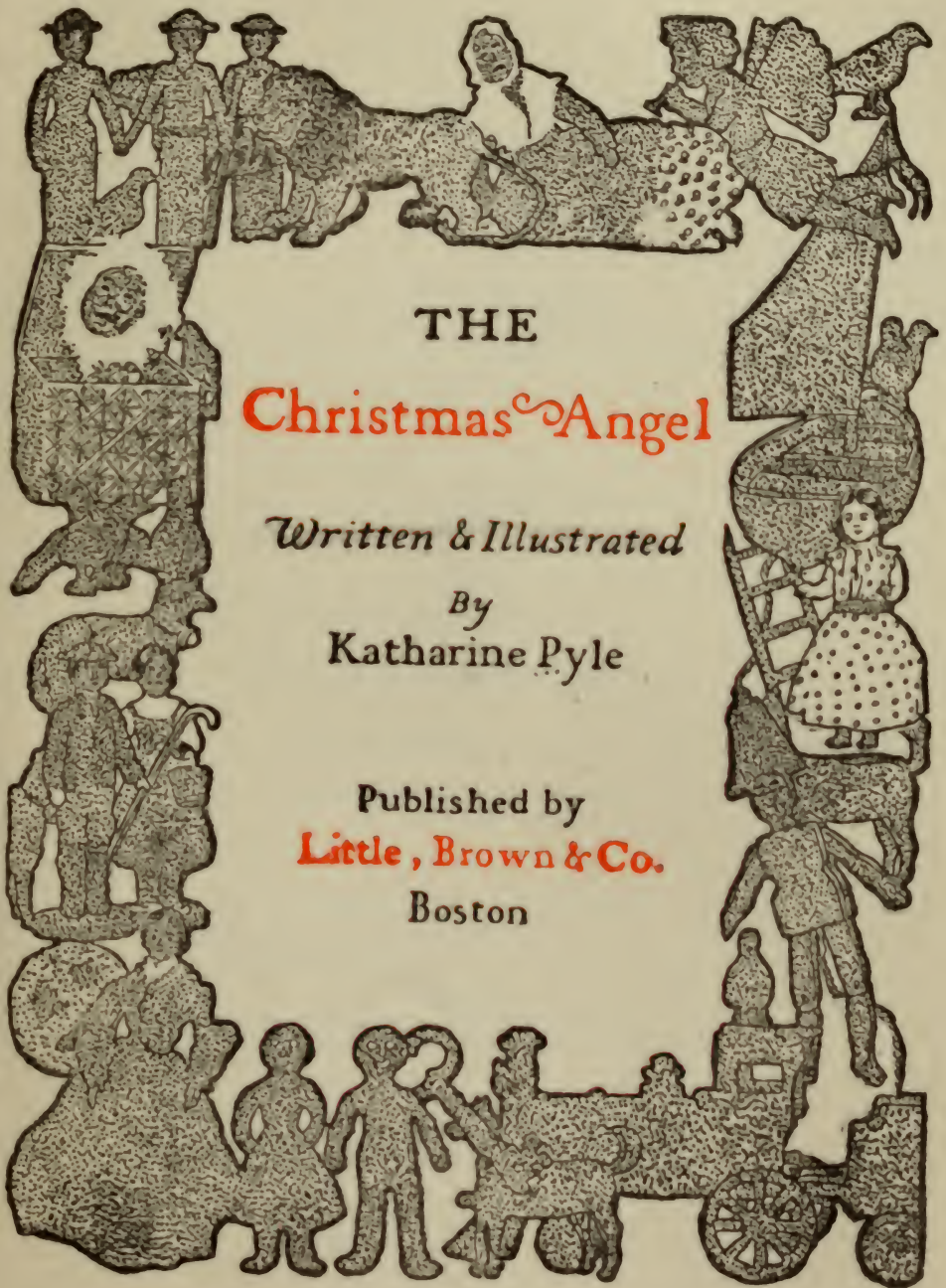
HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

ac.3262

The Christmas Angel

"Aunt Josephine led her over to the bed and lifted one corner of the afghan."

394.268
C46t
P994



THE Christmas Angel

Written & Illustrated
By
Katharine Pyle

Published by
Little, Brown & Co.
Boston

Copyright, 1899, 1900,

By Little, Brown, and Company.

All rights reserved.

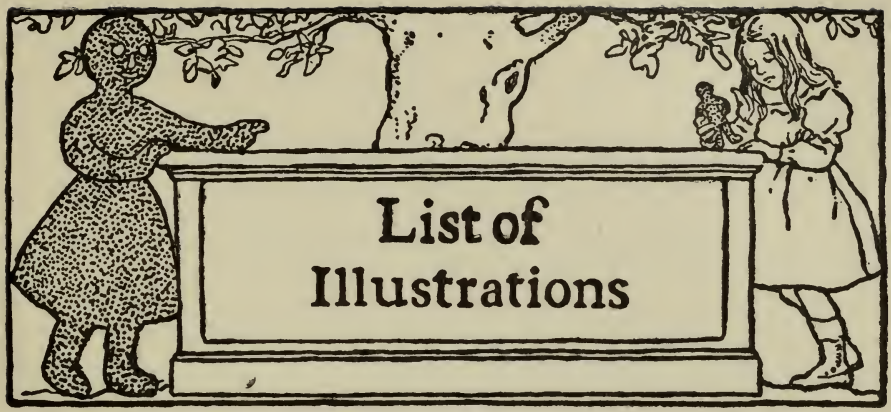
Printers

S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, U.S.A.

HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

Contents

Chapter		Page
I	Mary in the Garden	9
II	Aunt Josephine's Story	14
III	Down the Stream	31
IV	Up the Stream	39
V	In the Wonder Country	45
VI	The Farmyard People	67
VII	The Doll City	85
VIII	The Rag Mother's Story	95
IX	The Escape	104
X	The Pursuit	111
XI	Kris Kingle's Grandmother	118
XII	The Christmas Angel	127



List of Illustrations

"Aunt Josephine led Mary over to the bed and lifted one corner of the afghan" . . *Frontispiece*

The Wonder Country People . . . *Decorated Title*

Mary reading . . . . . *page* 5

Mary and Gingerita . . . . . *page* 7

On the Way to the Pea-patch . . . . *page* 9

"So sitting there on the green lawn . . . Aunt Josephine began the story" . *facing page* 13

"Kris Kingle went from one to another, reading the names" . . . . . *page* 18

"'Make me a gingerbread girl, won't you, Bridget?'" . . . . . *page* 31

"'I think some little child must have lost it'" . . . . . *page* 37

"She put the key in the keyhole and it fitted exactly" . . . . . *page* 43

"The gingerbread girl began to dance on her noiseless gingerbread toes" . *facing page* 46

"The Jumping-Jack told her the engine had been wound up" . . . . . *page* 55

"Jack-in-the-Box shouted to them to let the engine alone" . . . . . *page* 64

"'You bring that ladder right back,' she cried" . . . . . *page* 67

"'Oh, I'm so afraid I'll get wet,' moaned the gingerbread girl" . . . . . *facing page* 83

"The two dolls held a whispered talk outside" . . . . . *page* 85

"'Winona!' cried the rag mother, suddenly rising and waving her arms" . *facing page* 102

"'I warn you not to come any nearer,' cried Noah" . . . . . *page* 113

"'And so you have returned at last,' she said to the angel, very quietly" . . *facing page* 122

"Just then the baby opened his eyes and looked straight at Mary" . . . . *page* 127

The Christmas Angel . . . . . *page* 136

Chapter One

Mary in the Garden

MARY had been very busy all the morning playing circus. She had made a tent with a sheet spread over a clothes-line. Her dolls were the audience. For the menagerie she had the kittens and some chickens in hen-coops, while the performers in the ring were toy horses and figures.

Outside the tent Mary had a stand on which were peanuts and lemonade, just as at a real circus. The lemonade

was pink, too. She had colored it with raspberry juice.

When all was ready, she invited her mother and her Aunt Josephine to come and see it.

They looked and laughed and said it was all very fine, and Aunt Josephine even went into the tent and sat there for awhile on a soap-box. Then she and Mary's mother went back to where they had left their chairs and sewing-baskets, under the shade of the poplar-tree.

Very soon Mary followed them and hrew herself down on the grass near where they were sitting. "I wish I had some one to play with," she said.

That was a cry that her mother was quite used to, but she felt sorry for the little girl. It *was* lonely for her. Cliffside, where Mary lived, was far out in the country, and there were no children for miles around except Sarah Brown, who lived down the lane. Sarah played with her sometimes, but Sarah's playing times were very short. Her people were

poor, and she had to help her mother with the sweeping and washing, and to cook for the family.

Children came out from the city now and then to visit Mary, but they never stayed long, and after they had gone, it always seemed lonelier than ever. Mary thought she would be perfectly happy if she only had a brother or a sister.

"I *wish* I had somebody to play with," she said.

"Would n't you like to come over to the pea-patch with me?" asked Aunt Josephine. "I 'm going to gather some peas for dinner, and you can help me, and then when we come back I 'll tell you a story."

Mary was glad to have something to do, so she put on her sun-bonnet, and she and her aunt started over toward the pea-patch.

On the way they went through the fruit garden, and Mary stopped to look for a ripe pear among the grass. The little girl loved the fruit garden. The

shady paths were bordered with trim edges of boxwood, and the grass was very soft and green.

On this grass, all through the summer and autumn, the fruit fell according to its season. First the cherry-trees glowed with cherries. Then great yellow pears plumped softly down. Plums, with their purple skins split to show the yellow pulp inside, fell there, too; and summer apples; and velvety peaches with a drop of honey-sweet juice oozing out.

Mary was allowed to gather all the fruit that she could eat after it had fallen from the tree. She had to be careful, however, for the bees and wasps loved it as well as she. Once she had bitten into a peach, and a wasp which was hiding inside had stung her so that her lip had swollen out, and hurt her terribly.

Now she lingered to gather a particularly fine pear, and then ran after her aunt.

She did not help much about gathering the peas, however, for one of the

kittens had escaped from the menagerie, and by the time she caught it, her aunt had almost filled the basket with pods.

She was very warm when she and Aunt Josephine went back to the lawn. Her mother took off her sun-bonnet, and brushed back the hair from her forehead. "Oh, how hot you are, my little girl," she said.

"I'm not very hot," said Mary. "Now will you tell me the story, Aunt Josephine?"

"Let me think what it shall be about," said her aunt. "It ought to be a cool-weather story, because you are so warm. How would you like a snowy, blowy, freezy Christmas story?"

"Yes, tell that," said Mary.

So sitting there on the green lawn with the peas rattling down into the tin pan on her lap, Aunt Josephine began the story.

Chapter Two

Aunt Josephine's Story

OLD Mrs. Kingle is Kris Kingle's grandmother. She lives up in the Wonder Country, far away at the other end of Nowhere. There she cooks her grandson's meals and sweeps his house and takes care of the toys all through the year.

It's not so easy to take care of the toys, either, for until Christmas comes the playthings are all alive, and Mrs. Kingle raises them just as farmers raise sheep and cows and chickens.

It's only toward Christmas time, when Kris Kingle gets ready his sleigh and reindeer to carry the toys to the children, that they become stiff and unwinking, the way they are when you find them under the Christmas tree.

It was last Christmas, and Kris Kingle had been out harnessing his reindeer. When he came in, little filmy feathers were clinging to his fur boots and overcoat. The night before, Mrs. Kingle had shaken her feather bed out of the window, and though most of the feathers had come drifting down into this world a few of them had stayed up there in the Wonder Country.

Always when the feathers from Mrs. Kingle's bed come drifting down to the earth the children shout: "Look! look! It 's snowing. Now we can get out our sleds;" for they call the feathers snow.

Kris Kingle came stamping in, and his grandmother could hear the reindeer shaking their silver bells in the moonlight outside.

"Well, Grandmother," said Kris Kingle, "have you the bags of toys all ready for me?"

"I should think I had," said his grandmother. "Haven't I been busy packing them for the last week?"

Then she rose from her rocking-chair, and settling her spectacles on her nose she took down a great iron key from beside the mantelpiece and unlocked a closet door.

If you could only have looked behind that door you would have seen the most wonderful closet you ever dreamed of. There was a beautiful clear light in there that did not come from either door or window, — you could n't tell where it came from; and there on the shelves all the toys were arranged according to their kind.

On the lowest shelf were the farmyard animals. They walked about among the toy trees that grew on little brown trunks, and every morning and evening the little plaster shepherds and shepherdesses came out from the farmhouses at the back of the shelf, and fed the animals with green "excelsior," and milked the cows.

The wild animals were on this same shelf, but they were kept away from the

others by a high, strong wall made of bricks; a wall so strong and so high that even the very fiercest of the lions and tigers could n't get over it.

On the shelf just above this were all the dolls, and it was furnished with the most beautiful little doll furniture: sofas and chairs, tables, stoves, mirrors, desks, and sideboards filled with beautiful little sets of toy dishes. From the shelf above, which was like a ceiling to the dolls, hung tiny chandeliers filled with little, little candles that would really burn.

Then on the top shelf were all the queer toys, like Jack-in-the-boxes and puzzles, kaleidoscopes and Punch-and-Judy shows, and all that sort of thing. Very funny times they had on that top shelf, too, I can tell you, they were such comical toys.

Ranged round on the floor of the closet were sleds and express wagons and bicycles, and there were barrels and barrels of candy.

On Christmas eve there were other things on the floor of the closet too. These other things were the greatest number of bags all packed with toys and candies. Pinned neatly on each bag was the name of some child and the list he had sent to Kris Kingle of things he wanted for Christmas time. These were the bags that Kris was to take out in his sleigh to the little children of the world.

Kris Kingle went from one to another, reading the names on them, and after a while he read out, *Mary Greyson.* "Oh, yes," he said, "I know who that is; she's the little girl who lives at Cliffside.

She's a very good little girl, too, even if she does fret sometimes because she has no one to play with. It seems to me, Grandmother, that you're sending her a very small bag."

"It's what she asked for, though," said Mrs. Kingle. "If you look you'll see the list pinned on the outside of the bag."

"Oh, I'm sure it's all right," said Kris, "you're so careful; only I thought the bag looked small."

"I wish I had asked him to bring me a live toy," said Mary. "Do you think he'd have done it if I asked him?"

"I hardly think he would," said Aunt Josephine. "You see, he never has done that, and if he should for once, all the little children would be asking for them. The only way you could manage that would be to see Mrs. Kingle herself and ask her; she's a very kind old lady. But then, I never have heard of any one finding the way to the Wonder Country, and I don't know exactly where it is myself."

Then Aunt Josephine went on with her *story*.

Kris was still reading over the names on the bags, but his grandmother said: "Now, Kris, you'd better be making haste. There's a great deal to be carried about this year."

"All right! I'll be off in a minute," said Kris Kingle, catching up as many bags as he could carry and hurrying out with them. Before long he had the sleigh packed full. Then he sprang in himself and shook the lines.

"Come, Dasher and Dancer;
Come, Prancer and Vixen;
On, Comet; on, Cupid;
On, Donner and Blitzen."

As soon as Kris Kingle shook the lines and shouted to them by name away all the deer flew so fast that the wind whistled past Kris's ears.

Away and away they went, until at last they came to a town lying all still and white, with every one asleep in bed.

There Kris Kingle was busy enough, carrying one bag after another down the chimneys and leaving them in the nurseries, and all the time he went about his work so quietly that not a soul heard him.

After he had left all the bags that were meant for the city children, away he flew over the snowy roofs and out into the wide, white country.

And which do you think was the first house where he stopped? It was the little house down the lane where Sarah Brown lives.

Light as a snowflake, the reindeer and the sleigh full of toys lighted upon the roof, and Kris Kingle stepped down in his fur boots and lifted out the great bag of toys that had the name "Sarah Brown" pinned on it. The paper was not on it now, for it had blown away. Still, Kris remembered which it was.

"I do wonder what grandmother's sent her, anyway," said Kris. "She never sent such a big bag of toys before. I think I'll just take a peep."

When he opened the bag and looked in he gave a long whistle. "Whew-w-w-w!" he whistled. "I never knew Sarah to ask for such fine things before."

And they were fine, I can tell you.

There was a large music-box, a flexible-flyer sled, a little iron stove that you could really cook with, and a set of toy dishes. But the finest of all was a book of animals, which was something quite new among Kris Kingle's toys. First there was a picture of a cow, and if you pulled a ribbon that hung from the back of the book the cow lowed. The next picture was of a cock, and you pulled another ribbon and the cock crowed; another, and a dog barked, and so on. It was one of the finest toys that Kris Kingle had.

"Why, those are exactly the things I want next Christmas," cried Mary, interrupting again.

But Aunt Josephine went on with the story without noticing Mary's remark.

"This is a queer go," said Kris Kingle to himself, "but I suppose grandmother knew what she was about."

Then he slipped down the chimney and left the toys where Sarah would see them the very first thing when she awoke in the morning.

After that away he drove to Cliffside. There, too, everybody was asleep, so he lifted out the bag marked with Mary's name, and down the chimney and into the nursery he went with it.

But when he opened the bag to take out the toys, oh! what a few there were! There was—

A doll with eyes that would n't close.
A toy broom.
A new pair of shoes.
A work-box.
A pair of mittens.
And some candy.
That was all.

"This is more and more curious," said Kris Kingle. "There must be something wrong about this." Then he looked at the list of things that Mary had sent, and which was pinned on the side of the bag, — a list that Mary had printed herself.

A flexible-flyer sled.
A music-box.
A cook stove.
A set of toy dishes.
A book of animals that will make a noise like Cousin Edith's.

And so on; exactly what had been in the bag that Kris Kingle had left at

the Browns', and not at all what he had brought in the bag marked Mary Greyson.

Then Kris understood exactly what had happened. His grandmother had grown so old that she could n't see very well now, even with her spectacles, and she had put the wrong names on the bags.

Kris Kingle was perfectly aghast. What was to be done about it? Sarah Brown would n't mind as long as she had those fine toys, even if she did n't get the things she asked for. But how disappointed Mary would be! Perhaps she would cry. Oh, it would never do. The toys must be changed around, and that right quickly.

In a great hurry Kris Kingle climbed up the chimney again, taking the bag of toys with him, and away he drove toward the Browns'.

He was just about to go down the chimney when he heard a child's voice give a shriek of joy. It was Sarah.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she cried. "A real little stove, and toy dishes." Then there was another shriek of joy as she saw the beautiful sled.

Kris Kingle gave a groan. He had forgotten how very, very early Sarah had to get up to cook the breakfast. Now she had seen the toys, and he could never be so cruel as to take them from her.

But what should he do about Mary? He thought for a little while. There was nothing left for him to do but to fly back home again and get another bag of toys exactly like those he had left for Sarah.

The great thing was, would he have time to do it? It was late already, and Mary would soon be awaking.

However, Kris Kingle must try to do it. He leaped into his sleigh again, and away he flew toward the north. He reached the grandmother's house, burst open the door, and rushed over to the toy closet.

"Mercy on me, Kris! What's the matter?" asked his grandmother.

But Kris had no time to talk. He had caught up a bag and was putting toys into it as fast as he could: a toy stove, a music-box, a sled, — everything just exactly like what he had left at Sarah's home. Then he was out and away again almost before his grandmother had time to catch her breath.

Fast, fast he flew to Mary's house, and down the chimney. And none too soon. Already the little girl had begun to gape and turn in bed. Suddenly she remembered. "Why, it's Christmas," she cried. "Oh, I do wonder what Kris Kingle has brought me."

She hardly could stop to slip her little bare feet into her slippers, as her mother had told her to do, before she was off to the nursery.

She flung open the door, and there on the window-seat were exactly the things she had asked for.

If she had looked at the fireplace she would have seen something like a gray mouse just disappearing up the chimney. But it was n't a mouse. It was really the toe of Kris Kingle's furry boot. A minute more and Mary would have caught him.

But how surprised Mary was when she went down to see Sarah that afternoon and to carry her a paper drum full of sugar-plums.

"You must come up and see the *beautiful* things Kris Kingle brought me, Sarah," she said. "He brought me the dearest little cook stove!"

"So did he bring me one," said Sarah.

"But mine has little kettles and pots, and an oven door, and a draught that will really turn."

"So has mine."

"But he brought me something else; he brought a flexible-flyer sled."

"So did he bring me one."

So it was with everything that

Mary had, — Sarah had one exactly like it.

It was hard to tell which little girl was the happier, and after a while they took out their sleds and sledded down Penny Hill until they grew so hungry that Mary said she felt as though she could eat a whole turkey herself.

After dinner she played with the book and music-box and cooked on the little stove. For years afterward Mary remembered that Christmas as one of the very happiest ones she had ever had.

. . . . . .

Mary loved to hear stories about things she might have had or done herself, and now she sat entranced until her aunt ended. Then she thought a while; at last she heaved a sigh.

"I wish I *could* get a live toy," she said. "I wish I could find Mrs. Kingle's house, and I would beg and tease for one until she *had* to give it to me. I

wish you really knew the way there, Aunt Josephine."

But Aunt Josephine did n't. Besides, she had finished shelling the peas by that time, and Mary was sent around to carry them to the cook.

J
P99

Chapter Three

Down the Stream

THE next day Bridget, the cook, was very busy making ginger-cakes. The kitchen was full of the delicious smell of them.

Mary kneeled on a chair beside the table, watching Bridget, who fitted the

round cutter in the dough so neatly that the edge of every cake touched that of the one next to it. Mary said the four-sided pieces left between looked like pin-cushions. "Make me a gingerbread girl, won't you, Bridget?" she asked.

Bridget was in a very good humor that morning, so she got a knife and cut out a gingerbread girl, and after that a gingerbread boy, too. She laid them carefully in one corner of a pan of cakes, and then slid the pan in the oven.

Before long they were done, and just as Bridget was turning them out into the cloth Sarah Brown came to the kitchen door. She said her mother had sent her up to borrow a cup of brown sugar. Mrs. Brown was always sending to borrow something or other, and it provoked Bridget. Now, as she got a cup and went to the pantry, she muttered to herself something about having no patience with folks who were always out of things.

"Can't you stay and play with me awhile, Sarah?" asked Mary.

Sarah said no, that her mother wanted the sugar right away; but as she saw all the freshly baked ginger-cakes and smelled the hot, spicy smell, her mouth watered.

"Maybe I 'll come back if you 'll get some cakes and play tea-party," she said.

"Oh, yes, I will," cried Mary; "and we 'll take them down to the brook and have our tea-party there, won't we?" So, when Bridget came back, the little girl begged from her a saucerful of cakes.

Sarah put her mouth close to Mary's ear and whispered to her to bring some peaches, too.

"Yes, I will," said Mary.

"What's that Sally was whispering about?" asked Bridget, as soon as the child had gone off with the sugar. But Mary would not tell her, and ran out of the kitchen with the plate of hot cakes and her gingerbread girl and boy.

Just back of the vegetable garden at Cliffside a rocky and wooded hill dropped steeply down to a noisy brook.

At one place the rocks made quite a large cave, and this cave was Mary's playhouse. She had furnished it with two little red chairs and a small table, and on a rocky ledge at the back, which made a natural shelf, she had arranged a set of toy dishes, and some shells that she had picked up at the seashore.

It was always cool and shady in this cave, and one's ears throbbed with the ceaseless rush of the stream.

It was to this playhouse that Mary carried the cakes and peaches, and it was there that she arranged the table for the tea-party. She set out the plates and cups and saucers, and filled the teapot at the stream. Last of all, she propped up the gingerbread girl and boy on the table as visitors.

Just as she had it all fixed, Sarah came scrambling down over the rocks, hot and out of breath.

"Let 's begin right away," she said, "because I got to go back in a little while." So the two little girls drew their chairs up to the table.

First they had the ginger-cakes and tea, and then they ate the peaches. "Now let 's eat the boy and girl," said Sarah, greedily.

"Indeed we won't," cried Mary. "I 'm going to keep them, they 're so cute."

Sarah's face fell. "They 'll get dry," she said. "Why don't you eat them now?"

"I don't want to."

"I 'm going home if you don't."

"Don't go home, Sarah," Mary begged. "Let 's get some more water in the teapot, and I 'll let you pour out if you 'll stay."

But when Sarah found she could not induce Mary to eat the gingerbread figures she ran away.

After she had gone it seemed very lonely in the cave, and Mary thought she would go home herself, as soon as she had had a drink of water.

She took a little glass mug down to the edge of the brook to fill it, and kneeling on a great rock she dipped it down into the swift, brown water.

Suddenly she saw coming, sailing down the stream toward her, now lodging against a rock, now drifting clear again, the cunningest little boat, painted red and white.

Mary stared with her mouth open and her eyes round with surprise.

Nearer and nearer came the little boat, and at last it lodged in a crack between the very rock where Mary was kneeling and the one next to it.

Wondering and almost afraid to touch it, as though it had been some fairy thing, Mary reached over and lifted it from the water.

It was the prettiest little boat! It was not more than six inches long. There were seats across it, and at one end stood a china doll as captain.

"Is n't that cute! I wonder where it came from," whispered Mary. She had

played alone so much that she had a way of talking to herself. "I think some little child must have lost it."

She began to dry it carefully with her handkerchief, when suddenly a thought came to her that fairly made her gasp. Perhaps this was a live toy that had somehow drifted out of Mrs. Kingle's closet and was sailing down the stream by itself to look for some child to belong to.

"Dolly, did you come from the toy closet?" whispered Mary. "Just tell me, dolly, and I won't tell, — not *anybody*, — truly I won't." But the doll said nothing.

Then another bright thought flashed into Mary's mind. If the doll had really sailed down from where Mrs. Kingle lived, this brook must come past her house, and if she were to follow it, it would certainly show her the way. "I will; I 'll just follow it up and see where it comes from," said Mary.

Before starting, however, she took the boat and the doll up to the cave and laid them on the shelf to await her return. The gingerbread figures she carried with her, for if she left them there alone they might get eaten by some animal. So with them for her only companions Mary started out in search of Kris Kingle's grandmother.

Chapter Four

Up the Stream

SHE ran gayly on, following a broken path that led along the bank, sometimes clambering over rocks, sometimes breaking through bushes.

At first it was rough, but before long it grew smoother and more easy to follow. Once she passed a deserted mill, and the windows seemed to stare at her blankly.

Once she crossed a clearing where two frame shanties had been built. In the doorway of one stood a child eating a piece of bread and molasses. A man who was chopping wood paused to wipe his forehead and gaze after her, and a dog ran toward her, barking.

Mary hurried on, and very soon the trees hid the clearing from sight.

After a while the course of the stream led her out from the woods to the open fields. There the banks grew steeper and steeper, and the brook ran between them narrow and deep. Long grasses overhung it, and dragon-flies flashed by, or hung motionless on the sedges with flat, transparent wings. Their eyes shone with all the colors of the rainbow.

At one place where there was a heap of rocks a great beech-tree was growing. Its gnarled roots made a sort of natural seat beside the water.

The seat looked so cool and shady that Mary thought she would rest there for a while before going farther.

She began to climb down, holding to roots and little bushes, but the rocks were slippery, and presently she trod on a loose one that turned. The bunch of grasses she was holding gave way, and she went tumbling, head over heels, down the bank, striking her head against a rock at the bottom.

The blow was so sharp that for a moment or so the little girl lay there feeling quite dazed. Then she scrambled to her feet.

As she did so, something fell from her lap to the ground. It was the head of the gingerbread boy; it had broken off in the fall. Mary picked up the head and was about to put it in her mouth when she thought that perhaps Bridget could fasten it on with a piece of dough when she went home.

So she slipped the head into her pocket and looked about her.

Then she saw that the stream she had been following did not come from be yond the beech-tree at all, as she had thought. Instead it sprang, cool and as clear as crystal, from among the roots of the tree.

But this was not all, for in the tree trunk itself, almost within reach of her hand, was a little door just large enough for a child to go through.

Mary had read her "Alice in Wonder-

land" until she almost knew it by heart, and as soon as she saw this little door she remembered the one that Alice had found in the hall down the rabbit-hole. There was a keyhole in this door, too, just as there had been in that one.

Filled with eagerness, Mary sprang to her feet and tried to open the door. But, alas! it was locked, and here there was no little glass table with a key on it, — no little cakes to make her grow smaller so she might creep through a crack.

She was so disappointed, so tired, and so shaken by her fall, that her lips began to tremble; and presently two large tears ran down her cheeks and fell plump into the brook.

It was a noisy little brook just here, talking and babbling to itself as it sprang from among the roots almost as though it had a voice.

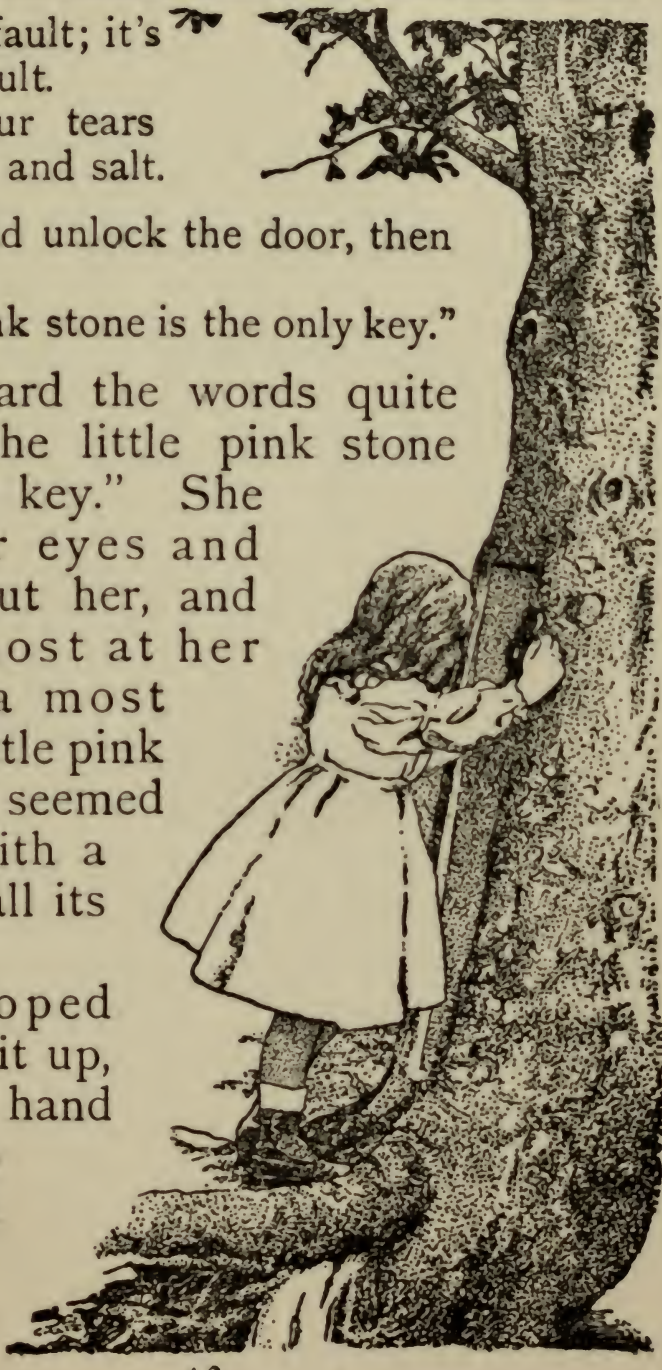
Then, as Mary stood with the tears still brimming in her eyes, she heard the water really talking to itself, and this is what it said: —

"It's not my fault; it's
not my fault.
Oh, but your tears
are bitter and salt.

"If you would unlock the door, then
see!
The little pink stone is the only key."

Mary heard the words quite plainly, "The little pink stone is the only key." She wiped her eyes and looked about her, and there, almost at her feet, lay a most beautiful little pink stone, that seemed to shine with a rosy light all its own.

She stooped and picked it up, and in her hand it turned to a little pink key.



She put the key in the keyhole and it fitted exactly. She turned it, the door swung open before her, and in a moment she had stepped through it out of the real land into the Wonder Country.

Chapter Five

In the Wonder Country

MARY stood in the Wonder Country, staring about her with round eyes. Such a country she had never seen before.

The grass was of different colors, and grew in patterns all over the fields and hills. In the meadow where she was standing it was exactly like the pattern of the carpet in the nursery at home. On the trees grew beautiful, shining Christmas-tree balls and ornaments.

Close by was a bush loaded with sugary doughnuts. Farther on was a tangle of mince-pie bushes, and a flock of roast turkeys ran past and were lost to sight behind a plum-pudding hedge.

Suddenly one of the gingerbread figures that Mary held began to move and

struggle, and in a moment it had slipped from her fingers and fallen to the ground.

Scarcely had it touched the grass when it began to grow. It grew and grew and grew, until it was as tall as Mary, and there it stood, just like a real live child, only all made of gingerbread.

Before Mary could speak the gingerbread girl began to dance on her noiseless gingerbread toes, and as she danced she sang: —

"Oh, but I 'm glad; oh, but I 'm glad!
Oh, what a terrible time I 've had!

"The brook is followed, the door is passed;
To the Wonder Country I 've come at last.

"Icing and plum! Sugar and crumb!
Oh, but I 'm glad to think I 've come!"

"Why! you 're alive, are n't you?" cried Mary.

"Of course I am," said the gingerbread girl. "Once I was only a cake, but now I 'm alive and have a name, just like any one."

" The gingerbread girl began to dance on her noiseless gingerbread toes."

"And what is your name?" asked the little girl.

"My name 's Gingerita."

"The gingerbread boy did n't come alive, did he?" said Mary, looking down at the headless gingerbread figure she still held in her hand.

As soon as Gingerita saw what Mary held she caught it from her with a cry. "Oh, it 's my little brother! It 's Molas-sander!" she cried. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! Who has broken his head off?"

"Nobody," said Mary, feeling rather frightened; "it just broke itself when I fell."

"Oh, this is terrible," moaned Gingerita. "What have you done with his poor head?"

"I have it here;" and Mary took it from her pocket. "Perhaps we can stick it on."

Gingerita shook her head sadly. "There is only one person who could do that," she said, "and that is Mrs. Kingle."

"Mrs. Kingle!" cried Mary, eagerly. "Do you know where she lives? I do want to find her most dreadfully."

"I don't know where she lives," said the gingerbread girl, "but I know it's somewhere here in the Wonder Country, and I'm going to try to find her and get her to mend my little brother."

"And I'll go with you," cried Mary, "because I have to see her too."

"Very well," said Gingerita; so hand in hand the two children set out to look for Mrs. Kingle.

As they walked along Mary, who was always friendly with people, told the gingerbread girl all about why she had set out to find the Wonder Country; about Aunt Josephine's story, and of the little pink key that opened the door in the tree. She told her, too, how she hoped that when she found Mrs. Kingle the kind old lady would give her a live toy to carry home with her.

At that Gingerita suddenly stood still. "You don't mean to ask her to

give me to you to take home, do you?" she asked.

"Oh, no," said Mary. "I 'm going to ask her for a real toy."

"I would n't want to go back to that other world again," Gingerita went on. "I want to stay here in the Wonder Country, and be alive. You 're *sure* you won't ask for me?"

"No," repeated Mary, "I won't ask for you."

She was too polite to tell the gingerbread girl that she hoped to receive a very much prettier toy than she was: Gingerita was so very, very ugly, and what Mary really hoped for was a beautiful toy, with flaxen curls, and rosy cheeks, and great blue eyes like her best doll at home.

"Very well," said Gingerita, "if you 're sure you won't ask for me we 'll go on." And she started briskly again.

The two little girls walked and walked, and after a while they came to a city.

It was the strangest place that Mary

had ever seen in all her life, for it was a city of toys, and they were all alive.

At one place a Punch and Judy, as large as life, were giving a show. A crowd of Jumping-Jacks, calico Brownies, and figures of plaster and iron had gathered before it to look on.

Farther on a jointed Jim Crow on a box was dancing and clapping his cymbals.

At another place a cobbler, just like a sand-toy Mary had at home, sat back of a square of glass sewing away at a shoe, and rolling his eyes every time he took a stitch.

But whatever the toys were doing, as soon as they saw Mary and Gingerita they stopped to stare at them, and as many of them as could walk followed the two children as they went up the street.

They kept crowding closer, and squeaking and creaking louder and louder, too, so that Mary began to feel a little frightened, though she kept saying to herself,

"They 're nothing but toys, anyway, even if they are alive." She hoped, however, that Mrs. Kingle would give her a pleasanter toy than any of them seemed to be.

At last, just as they reached the cobbler's, a bold-looking Jumping-Jack with a harlequin suit and a very red face stepped in front of Mary, and stood there, blocking the way.

"You 're a human child, are n't you?" he said, looking her up and down.

"Yes, I am," said the little girl.

All the toys were so silent now that she could hear the sand running down in the cobbler's box.

"And what do you want here in the Land of Toys, if one may make so bold?" he asked.

"I want to find Mrs. Kingle," said Mary.

"She 's going to Mrs. Kingle. She 's going to Mrs. Kingle. A tell-tale! A tell-tale!" cried all the toys.

"I 'm not a tell-tale," said Mary, indignantly.

"Do you mean to say you 're not going to tell Mrs. Kingle anything about us toys?" asked the Jumping-Jack, slyly.

Mary thought for a moment. "Well, it 's not *exactly* about you," she said with a blush, for she had meant when she asked Mrs. Kingle for a toy to say she would rather have one that was gentler than these city toys.

"Do you hear?" cried the Jumping-Jack, turning to the other toys. "She can't say no."

"She can't say no;
Don't let her go,
Don't let her go,
For she can't say no,"

cried all the other toys, crowding closer about the children and waving their arms angrily.

Gingerita was so frightened that her hand grew quite soft and moist in Mary's, but Mary looked proudly around at the toys. "Yes, I shall go on, too," she said; "you 're only toys."

Suddenly the Jumping-Jack grew very gentle. "That 's true," he said; "we are only toys, but then this is Toy Land, and you don't know where to find Mrs. Kingle, even if you try. Now what you had better do is to go with us to Cousin Jack-in-the-Box. He is the oldest and wisest toy in all Toy City, and he can tell you more about how to find her than any one here."

Then he waited breathlessly for the little girl's answer, and all the other toys waited, too.

"Why, yes," said Mary, gratefully. "If he can tell us how to find Mrs. Kingle we 'll be very glad to go with you."

The Jumping-Jack's arms and legs flew up as if some one had pulled the strings, and all the other toys gave a shout of joy. "She 'll go! she 'll go!" they cried. Then the Jumping-Jack turned to an iron fireman beside him. "You 'd better bring the train," he said, "for it's a long way to Cousin Jack-in-the-Box."

The fireman and several other toys hurried away, and presently there was a great noise and rattling, and around the corner came a tin train of cars drawn by a mechanical engine.

The train stopped before them, and the Jumping-Jack very politely helped Mary and Gingerita into a car. As many of the toys as could, crowded in after them. The fireman and another toy turned the key of the engine until it was wound up; then they jumped aboard, and in a few minutes the train was rattling down the main street of Toy Town.

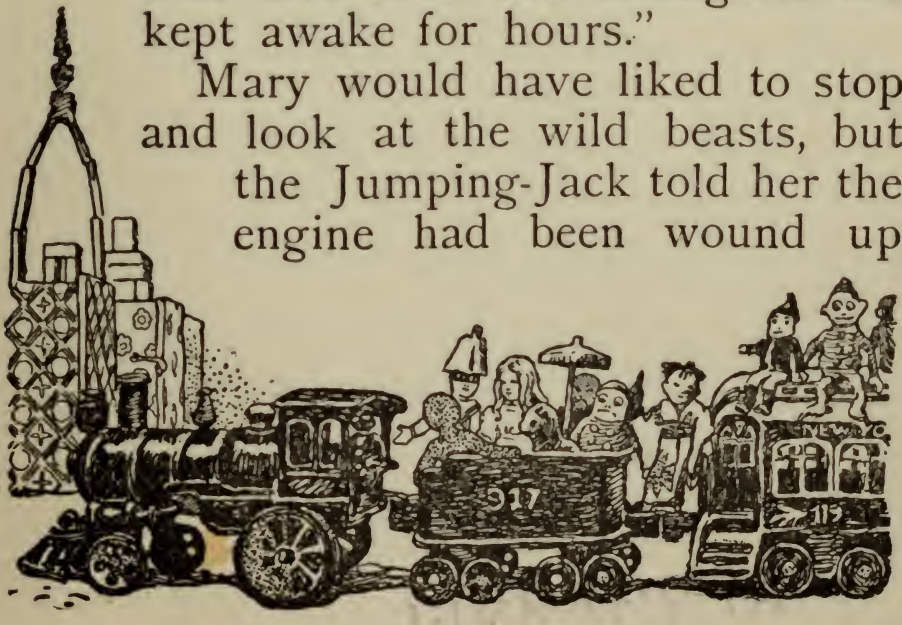
The travelling was very rough, and there were no seats to sit on, but in spite of the jolting Mary had time to look out and wonder at the sights of the city.

Here and there were houses or churches made of building-blocks, and some of them were very fine, with spires and clocks. But the most of the houses were really nothing at all but boxes lying on their sides, and with the lids partly open, so that the toys could go in

and out. Many of these lids had painted pictures of the toys on them, and their bright colors gave the street a very gay look, like a circus.

In the middle of the city was a menagerie of plaster animals. The Jumping-Jack pointed this out to Mary. "They are very fierce," he said, "particularly the lions and tigers. You see that keeper? He 's always there to see that they don't get loose. Sometimes they roar so loudly at night that the toys who live near the menagerie are kept awake for hours."

Mary would have liked to stop and look at the wild beasts, but the Jumping-Jack told her the engine had been wound up



to run as far as the Jack-in-the-Boxes' houses, and they couldn't stop until it ran down.

They had come now to a part of the town where all the houses were square boxes covered with paper in bright patterns, and lying on their sides so that the lids opened out on the street. The lids of these boxes, or the fronts of the houses, whichever you choose to call them, were fastened with hooks. This was the part of the town where all the Jack-in-the-Boxes lived, and the other toys hardly ever dared to venture there, for they are all rather afraid of the Jacks. The Jumping-Jack was the bravest about it, for he is a sort of cousin of the Jack-in-the-Boxes.

The train had begun to slow down by then, and presently it stopped with a creak before a box covered with large green and red plaid.

"Here we are," cried the Jumping-Jack, getting out; and all the other toys

began to tumble out, too. Last of all came Mary and Gingerita.

The Jumping-Jack walked over to the red and green house, and put his hand on the hook that fastened the lid. "Are you all ready?" he asked, looking around at the others.

"Yes, we're all ready," the toys answered. They had all pressed back from the box, leaving an empty space before it; that is, all but a calico Brownie, who seemed to be new to the city, and who pushed up close to the very lid of the box.

"Then I'll unhook it," said the Jumping-Jack. Still he hesitated, as if afraid. At last he drew a long breath and pushed up the hook; at the same moment he sprang back from the box. And none too soon, for the moment the hook was unfastened the lid flew back, and with a loud "woof!" out popped the head of the most hideous old man that Mary had ever seen.

He had a round, red face, with thick lips and hard, goggly eyes. His beard

and hair were as white as snow, and stood out from his head like a bush, and this head itself was larger than his body.

When the lid flew open it hit the poor little Brownie, who had not been expecting it, and sent him flying through the air, and he came down astride of a plaster cat, that doubled up with a squeak. But the other toys paid no attention to him. They were all staring with a sort of terror at the Jack-in-the-Box who had popped out.

The old man glared about him angrily with his painted eyes, and at last he spoke in a hoarse, creaking voice. "Who has dared to unfasten my latch and let my lid fly open?" he asked.

"It was the Jumping-Jack," cried all the toys together.

"Oh, it was the Jumping-Jack, was it?" said the Jack-in-the-Box, and his face grew redder than ever with rage.

"Forgive me, Cousin," said the Jumping-Jack, humbly. "You know it is n't

often that we dare to venture into this part of the town, or to disturb you or your brothers, but this time the need was pressing. Look! here is a human child who has somehow found her way in from the other world and is in search of Mrs. Kingle."

"And what is that to me?" asked the Jack-in-the-Box.

"Only this," said the Jumping-Jack. "You know how it was when the Christmas Angel used to fly back and forth from Mrs. Kingle's, and now this child is going, and who knows what tales she may be telling the old grandmother about us all, — you as well as the rest of us?"

"I don't tell tales," began Mary, angrily; but the Jack-in-the-Box interrupted her. "True, true," he said, "I had forgotten; the child must not go on. Do you hear, human?" he added, turning his eyes on the little girl; "you must go back the way you came."

"But I don't want to," said Mary. "I want to find Mrs. Kingle."

"Nay, that you shall never do," said the old man.

"I don't see why not," said Mary. "I have found the Wonder Country, and I don't see why I can't find her, too; and I would n't have come here at all, only that toy" — and she pointed to the Jumping-Jack — "told me you would tell me how to go."

"You are quite determined to go?"

"Yes, I am," said the child.

"Very well, then; wait a minute and I will tell you the only way I know to find her." With these words the Jack-in-the-Box turned to the Jumping-Jack and whispered something in his ear.

The Jumping-Jack gave a start, and a frightened look came into his face, but he nodded, and backing out through the crowd he ran down the street as fast as he could go.

"What 's the Jumping-Jack going for?" whispered Gingerita to Mary; but Mary had no time to answer, for the Jack-in-the-Box had turned to her once more.

"And so you want to find Mrs. Kingle?" he began again. "That 's not so easy to do, for in all of Toy Land there is only one person who knows the way to Mrs. Kingle's house, or dares to knock at her door."

"And who is that?" asked Mary.

The Jack-in-the-Box hesitated a moment, then he said in a low voice, "That is the *Christmas Angel*," and at the name a low moan sounded from all the toys.

Mary glanced around at them in wonder, and then she asked the Jack, "Where can I find the Christmas Angel?"

"Ah, where, indeed!" said the Jack-in-the-Box. "That I cannot tell you. To find that out you must journey still deeper into the Wonder Country. Farther on, and straight before you as your shadow falls, live the farmyard people. They are wiser than we are, for they live deeper in the Wonder Country, and they could tell you where to go to seek the Angel."

"Oh, thank you," cried Mary. "Come, Gingerita; let us go find the farm people."

"No, that you never shall do," cried the Jack-in-the-Box. "It is too late; for, hark!"

As he spoke a long, low roar sounded through the city. At the sound of it the toy people shook and trembled.

"What is that?" asked Mary, looking about her with a startled glance.

"It is the wild beasts," said the Jack-in-the-Box. "They have set them loose from the menagerie to keep you from journeying on."

As soon as the toys heard that the wild beasts were let loose they shrieked and began scampering away, some one way and some another. Some ran around the corners. Some rushed up to the boxes, and unlatching them, in spite of the angry Jacks who lived there, they crowded in and shut the lids to behind them.

Soon the street lay silent and quite deserted, except for Mary and Ginger-

ita and the old Jack-in-the-Box, who was still staring at them from his house.

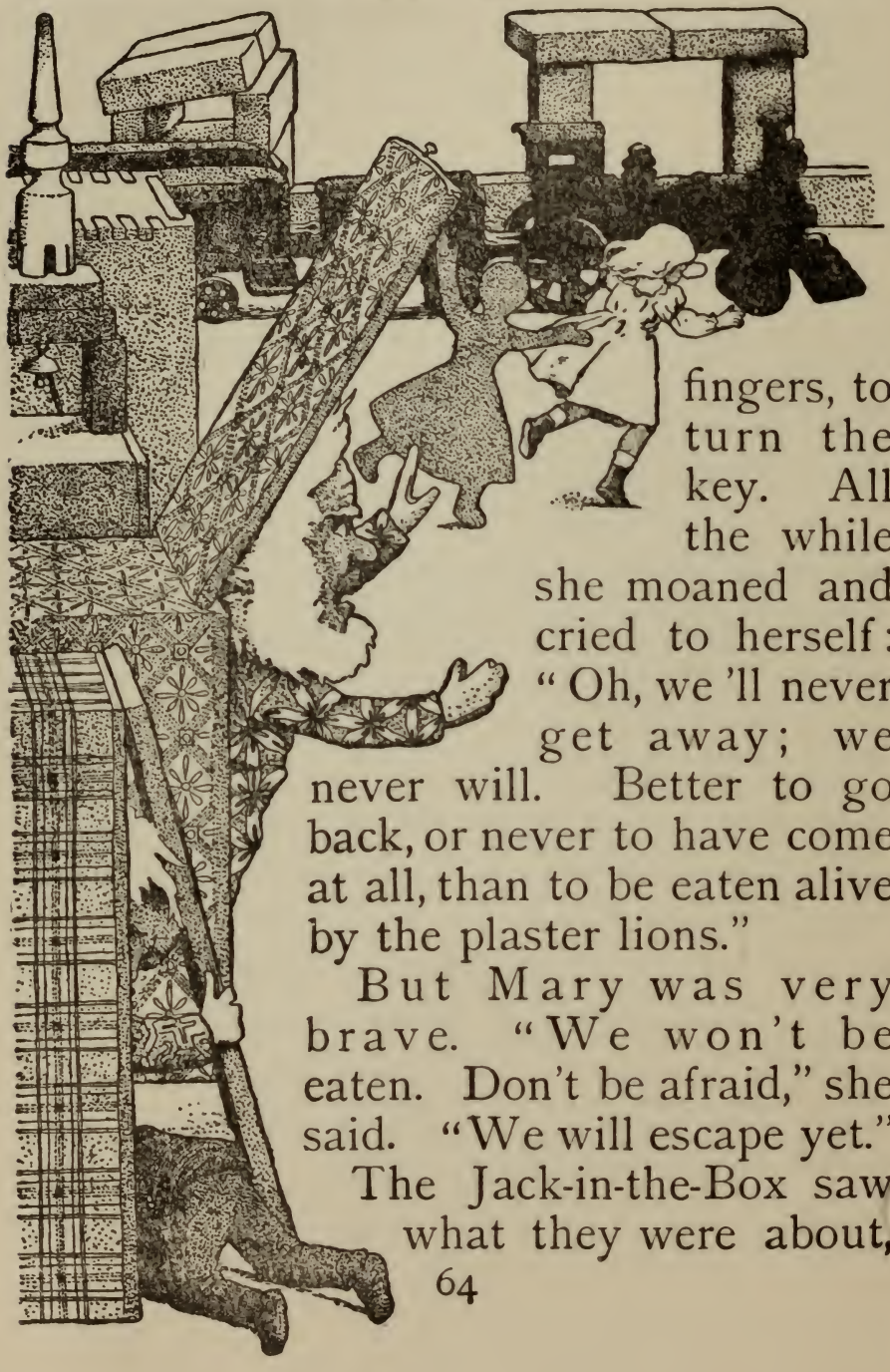
And now the roaring sounded again through the city, and it seemed to Mary that it was louder.

"Listen!" said the Jack-in-the-Box. "Do you hear that? The lions are coming nearer, but you may still escape. If you will promise to go back the way you came and not try to find Mrs. Kingle, I will let you hide in my box until hunger drives the wild beasts back to their cages again."

But Mary, looking about, saw the train of cars was still standing where the fireman had left it when he fled.

"No, I will not promise," she cried, "and I will find Mrs. Kingle in spite of you." Running up the street to the engine, she began to turn the key that wound it up. "Come, Gingerita," she cried; "come and help me."

Quickly Gingerita ran to her, and began, as well as she could with her soft



fingers, to turn the key. All the while she moaned and cried to herself: "Oh, we 'll never get away; we never will. Better to go back, or never to have come at all, than to be eaten alive by the plaster lions."

But Mary was very brave. "We won't be eaten. Don't be afraid," she said. "We will escape yet."

The Jack-in-the-Box saw what they were about,

and shouted to them to let the engine alone, but they paid no heed to him, and only wound the faster. He was fastened in his box with glue, and though he tugged and pulled at his heavy feet with all his might he could not get them free in time.

Soon the engine was wound up and the children sprang aboard. And none too soon, for scarcely had the train begun to move, when, from around a corner, came bounding a terrible plaster lion, with open jaws and glaring eyes.

As it saw them it leaped toward them with a roar. But the train was off. They heard the Jack-in-the-Box shriek, and saw him trying to close the door of his box, and then the train sped away with them faster and faster down the street and out into the country beyond.

The roaring of the lion grew fainter and fainter; the city faded from view, and when the train slackened its speed and slowly came to a standstill they were out in the wide, quiet country again.

"And now," said Mary, as she and Gingerita climbed down from the car, "the next thing for us to do is to find the farmyard people."

Chapter Six

The Farmyard People

MARY and Gingerita left the train where it stood, and walked straight on, the way their shadows fell, just as the Jack-in-the-Box had told them to do.

It was not long before, instead of wild, unfenced country, they began to see fields on either hand. Herds of plaster cattle and flocks of sheep were grazing in the meadows. Presently a turn in the road

brought them within sight of a farmhouse with a barn and outhouses. "Just exactly like the ones I have at home," cried Mary, with pleased excitement. "And just look at those pigeons on the roof! If they were only smaller they would look just like my Noah's Ark pigeons."

"Mary," said Gingerita, hanging back, "you know the way those things in the Toy City didn't want us to find Mrs. Kingle?"

"Yes, I know," said Mary.

"Well, I don't believe the farmyard people will want us to either, and I'm afraid."

"Oh, Gingerita, don't be such a coward; I'm not afraid. I never did like Jack-in-the-Boxes, anyway. They always make me jump. But I love the farmyard things. They won't mind our finding Mrs. Kingle."

Gingerita still looked anxious. "I don't believe they'll want us to go on," she said. But Mary only laughed at

her fears. The farmyard was her favorite plaything at home.

As they walked up the lane that led to the gate, Mary saw quite a number of plaster figures busily at work about the yard. A woman was filling a bucket at a tin pump painted bright green. The handle creaked as she moved it up and down, and out from the spout came real water. Another woman was feeding a flock of chickens.

A man in a Swiss costume, with a red ribbon about his shiny black hat and a crook in his hand, was just closing the gate into the sheep-pasture. A spotted dog walked beside him with stiff plaster legs.

Other men were harnessing two horses to a hay-wagon. The horses were very shiny, and had three-cornered wooden tails.

All the farm people stopped their work as Mary and Gingerita opened the gate and stood staring at them with round, black eyes.

"If you please," said Mary to the woman at the pump, "can you tell me where Mrs. Kingle lives?"

The woman only stared harder at her without answering, and Mary began to feel rather shy. She thought she would explain. "I was over in the Toy City," she said, "and there was a Jack-in-the-Box there, and when I told him I wanted to find Mrs. Kingle he said I must find you first, and you would tell me what to do."

The other farmyard people had drawn near now, the men leaving their horses half harnessed, and the chicken woman shooing her fowls out of the way. They gathered in a circle about the children, but none of them seemed inclined to break the silence.

At last the man with the crook spoke. "It's a human child," he said.

The woman with the bucket nodded without speaking.

Mary thought them very rude. "Can you tell me where to find Mrs. Kingle?" she asked in a louder voice.

"No, I can't," said the man with the crook. "None of us can, because we don't know. Why do you want to find her, anyway?"

"I want to ask her something," said Mary.

"Perhaps you want to tell her something, too," said the little man, slyly.

"Why, yes," said Mary, "I do want to tell her something;" she was thinking of how she meant to tell Mrs. Kingle of her loneliness with no one to play with.

The little plaster people looked at one another and nodded.

"If you can't tell me how to find Mrs. Kingle maybe you can tell me how to find the Christmas Angel," said Mary.

At that name all the farm people started, and once more looked at one another. Then they drew together, whispering among themselves. Presently the man with the crook spoke to Mary again. "The Christmas Angel?" he said slowly. "No, I can't tell you where to

find him, but I know of those who can."

"And who are they?" asked Mary.

"They are the dolls. They live farther in Wonderland than we do, and if any one can tell you where to find the Christmas Angel they can."

"And where can I find them?"

"They live across the stream and beyond the hill, in the Doll City," said the little man. "But I can do better than tell you the way; I can show it to you, if you can climb a ladder to the roof of the barn."

"Oh, yes, I can easily do that," said Mary. "Can't you, Gingerita?"

But Gingerita answered nothing.

"Then come with me," cried the little man, "and I'll show you where the ladder is."

He led the way across the farmyard to the barn, and Mary followed him, Gingerita lagging on behind, and the rest of the farm people following after her.

Back of the barn a ladder was lying on the ground. "Here, Thomas, you come help me with this," said the little man in the Swiss hat. One of the others hastened forward, and together they lifted the ladder and leaned it against the barn. It just reached the edge of the roof. "Can you climb up it?" asked the little man.

"Oh, yes, easily," cried Mary. "Come, Gingerita."

But the gingerbread girl caught her by the arm. "Don't go," she said in a terrified whisper. "Don't go. I know they are going to serve us some trick."

"Pooh! I'm not afraid," said Mary. "You needn't come if you don't want to;" and she began to climb the ladder, followed slowly by the unwilling Gingerita.

"You can see the roofs of the city from the ridgepole," called the little man from below.

The roof was not very steep, and Mary climbed up it on her hands and knees,

still followed by Gingerita. She felt very high above the ground there, and the sky seemed like a ceiling above her. Flocks of pigeons that had been perching on the roof, and which were disturbed at her coming, whirred away to another resting-place. Far away on every side stretched the many colored fields of Wonderland.

"What do you see?" called the little man.

"I see the trees, and I see the fields, and I see a bright stream, and the hills beyond."

"And do you see roofs and chimneys beyond those hills?"

"Yes, I see them, too," cried Mary.

"Then those are the roofs of Doll City, but many a long day it will be before you reach there."

Gingerita gave a shriek. "Quick! Quick!" she screamed. "They are taking away the ladder."

Her cry was echoed by Mary. Scrambling and slipping, she let herself down

to the edge of the roof. "Don't take that ladder away," she cried. "We are coming down."

But the treacherous little farm people below made no answer. Already they had the ladder too far away for Mary to reach it. They laid it on the ground, while the little women stood looking solemnly up at the children with unwinking eyes.

Gingerita wrung her hands, and wept sugary tears that hardened into icing as they fell. "I told you so! I told you so!" she cried. "Oh, why would you climb up here! We could have found our way to the Doll City without that."

But Mary stamped her foot at the plaster figures. "You bring that ladder right back," she cried. "We're not going to stay up here."

The little man shook his head. "No, no," he said. "We can't let you down. You'd be finding Mrs. Kingle and telling her all about everything. Oh, no: you must n't do that, you know."

"You're a naughty, naughty toy," cried Mary. But the little man paid no attention. He went over to the stable and busied himself putting some excelsior in the horse-rack.

The little woman who had been pumping took up her bucket and carried it into the house, the chicken woman went back to her chickens, and all the others returned quietly to their tasks just as though the children were not there. Only now and then one of them would stop for a moment to shade his eyes with a plaster hand and stare up at the roof of the barn, and then would turn to his work again.

"Gingerita, come here," commanded Mary. Then as the gingerbread girl came down and joined her at the edge of the roof she went on: "Gingerita, do you think this is too high for us to jump down? I believe I could do it."

Gingerita sadly shook her head. "Perhaps you might," she said, "because you're flesh and bones, and they are

tough. But I could n't, because I 'm only made of gingerbread, you know, and I 'd be sure to break."

"Then I don't see how we *are* to get down," said Mary. "Wait now until I think, and don't disturb me for a while."

She sat down on the edge of the roof, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, and her brows knitted with thought. Gingerita too sat down, and fixed her eyes anxiously on Mary.

"If we were only once on the ground I think we could run away from them," said Mary. "But how to get down! that 's the thing."

Again she was silent, pondering the question, and the stillness lasted so long that some pigeons which had been circling about overhead flew down quite close to them, and began pecking at the icing tears the gingerbread girl had shed.

"Gingerita," said Mary, very softly, "if we could only catch some of those

pigeons I think I know of a way to get down."

"But how could we catch them?" asked Gingerita.

Mary thought again. "They seem so tame," she said, "that if I were only a little closer I believe I could throw my apron over them."

"They 'd fly away in a moment if you were to move," said Gingerita; but Mary was not so sure of that.

Very gently she unbuttoned her apron and slipped it off. To be sure the pigeons flew away, scared by her movements, but they did not go very far, and soon they came back again for the icing.

Gingerita broke off some more from her frock and scattered it nearer, and presently the pigeons came closer and closer to the two little girls. Then, quick as a flash, Mary threw her apron over them.

The most of them flew away with a loud whirr of their wings, but three were still left struggling in the apron.

Mary took them out, and tying them together with her hair-ribbon, gave them to Gingerita to hold, while she herself waited for more pigeons to gather near.

It was some time before they did, tame as they were, for they had been frightened. At last, however, quite a number were pecking away again busily at the pieces of icing.

Then once more Mary threw her apron over them.

This time she only caught two.

The next throw was more successful, as four pigeons were taken prisoners.

At last, when quite a bunch had been caught, Mary divided them up into two lots. One lot she tied together into a team with her hair-ribbon; the other she tied with her handkerchief, which she tore into strips for the purpose.

"Now, Gingerita," she said, "one bunch is for you and one is for me. We will hold them with both hands, and when I count one, two, three, jump from the roof. Then the pigeons will try to

fly, and even if they can't carry us away with them their wings will keep us from coming down to the ground hard enough to break you."

"Oh, I don't believe it will," cried Gingerita. "I 'm afraid I 'll fall and break."

"No, you won't," said Mary. "You 'll just come down as softly. I saw a picture of a man that did this once and I know you won't hurt yourself."

Gingerita could hardly believe it. She was terribly frightened, but still, when Mary counted "One, two, *three*," she jumped off with her from the edge of the barn into the air.

Sure enough, just as Mary had said, the frightened pigeons beat with their wings, trying with all their might to fly, and though they were borne down by the weight of the children, it was so gently that when Gingerita and Mary touched the ground they were no more shaken or jarred than a bubble is when it drifts down through the air to the carpet.

"Now run," cried Mary, setting her pigeons free and making for the gate. Gingerita was not slow to follow her.

"Look! Look!" shrieked the chicken woman. "The children are running away."

The cry was taken up by all the farm people.

The woman who had been pumping ran out of the house, and seeing them at the gate, threw away her bucket and ran after them.

The men who had harnessed the horses had just climbed into the hay wagon, but they tumbled out again and joined the chase.

Everybody ran. But the man with the crook ran fastest, and his spotted dog bounded along beside him, barking terribly.

"Oh, Gingerita, *run!*" cried Mary. "If they catch us the dog will bite us to pieces."

Fast as the farm people ran, the two little girls kept ahead of them until they

came to the brook. There Gingerita suddenly stopped, sinking down on the grass. "Leave me," she sobbed; "I can't go any farther."

"Oh, yes, you can," cried Mary, catching her by the hand and trying to pull her up. "Don't stop now or they'll catch us."

"It's no use," moaned the gingerbread girl. "Don't you know I can't cross the stream? The water would melt me away. Better to be caught by the farm people than be melted."

"Oh, Gingerita, is there *no* way across?" cried Mary, looking wildly up and down the stream. Then suddenly she caught the gingerbread girl's hand again. "Come," she said, "I'll carry you across."

"You could n't, you could n't," said Gingerita, faintly.

But Mary only pulled her hand the harder. "I tell you I can," she cried. "Oh, make haste or they will surely catch us."

"'Oh, I'm so afraid I'll get wet,' moaned the gingerbread girl."

She made the unwilling gingerbread girl arise and then managed to lift her in her arms. She was heavier than Mary had thought she would be, and the little girl stumbled and staggered as she stepped down into the stream. Gingerita cried out, clutching at Mary with her gingerbread arms. "Don't squirm about," gasped Mary, "or I can't carry you."

"Oh, I'm so afraid I'll get wet," moaned the gingerbread girl.

Heavier and heavier grew Gingerita, and at last, just as they reached the farther bank, Mary stumbled and fell. But it was upon the bank she fell, and not in the water, and not so much as a drop had touched the gingerbread girl.

In a moment Mary was upon her feet. "Come," she cried. "Oh, make haste!" for already the farmyard people had reached the other bank. Only the stream was between them and the children.

But Gingerita sat still. "There's no hurry," she said coolly. "We're safe

now. Don't you know they can't cross the stream either? They 'd melt just as much as I."

Sure enough, the plaster people had stopped at the edge of the water. There they hopped up and down, stamping and shaking their fists and calling to the children to come back.

But Mary and Gingerita paid no attention to their threats. They waited until they had caught their breaths, and then went calmly on their way, leaving the farmyard people to wear out their rage by themselves.

Chapter Seven

The Doll City

MARY'S shoes and stockings were wringing wet, so before long she sat down, and taking them off put them in the sun to dry. She and Gingerita, meanwhile, rested in the shade of a doughnut bush.

They were both hungry as well as tired, so they pulled some doughnuts, and ate them while they sat there.

"Gingerita," said Mary, suddenly, "did

it hurt you when you were put in the oven to bake?"

"What oven?" asked Gingerita.

"Why, don't you know? The oven Bridget put you in. Don't you remember how she cut you out and put you in a pan and baked you?"

But the gingerbread girl remembered nothing of all this. The first thing she could remember was opening her eyes and seeing about her the many-colored fields of the Wonder Country.

"But you knew your little brother as soon as you saw him," said Mary.

"Yes, that is true," said Gingerita, thoughtfully, "but I don't know why I knew him. Perhaps it was because he was made of gingerbread, too."

The little girls sat there for some time, talking it over and wondering about it, till suddenly Mary remembered that time was passing and the Christmas Angel was still to be found who was to show them the way to Mrs. Kingle's house.

She picked up her shoes, and finding them quite dry she put them on in haste. "We must n't sit here any longer," she cried. "We have to find the Doll City now, but that won't be hard because we saw exactly how to go."

As soon as the last button was fastened, she sprang to her feet. Gingerita was just as eager as Mary, so together they ran along, first across the fields, and then following a road that wound around the hill, and so they came before long to the Doll City.

At the beginning of the street the two children began to go more slowly, looking about them curiously.

Large as were the houses that stood on either hand (and the doors were high enough for a child to pass through easily), it was plain to be seen that they were doll houses.

They were all of wood, some of them painted to imitate bricks, and some of them covered with paper. One was covered with a quaint old flowered wall-

paper, exactly like a doll's house in a closet at home, — a doll-house that had belonged to Mary's grandmamma when she was a little girl. Mary could even see a keyhole up near the second story just as there was in the doll-house at home, so she knew the whole front of the house could swing open when it was unlocked.

Across the street from it was another doll-house covered with paper to imitate bricks. "Oh, just look there!" cried Mary. "That's exactly like the one that was given me last Christmas, only it's so much bigger. Let's go over and find out who lives there. Maybe it's some of my very own dolls."

There was a little bell-pull at one side of the door, just as in the one at home, but it would not really ring a bell any more than the other would. It was only a pretend, so Mary knocked at the door.

A moment after, the curtain of the window was drawn aside, and a jointed wooden doll looked out. She looked for

a little while, and then, dropping the curtain, she came and opened the door and stood staring at Mary and Gingerita with her round, painted, black eyes. She was not one of the dolls whom Mary knew, after all.

"How do you do?" said the little girl.

The doll was silent for a minute. Then she said, "How do you do?" in a strange, far-away, mechanical voice.

"Can you tell me," said Mary, in her politest manner, "where Mrs. Kingle lives?"

Again the doll was silent for a while. Then she said, "No, I can't."

"Well, perhaps I should n't have asked for her," said Mary, "but maybe you can tell me where I can find the Christmas Angel."

Again the doll was silent. Mary could not tell whether she was silent because she was thinking, or because her works did n't move easily. Then she said, "What do you want of the Christmas Angel?"

"I want to ask him if he can show me the way to Mrs. Kingle's house. Do you know where I can find him?"

"You 'd better ask the old rag mother that," said the wooden doll. "In all the Wonder Country there is no one who knows where to find him as well as she."

"Where does the rag mother live?" asked Mary.

"She lives over there," said the doll, and raising one stiff wooden arm she pointed to the house across the way; the one covered with flowered wall-paper.

"Thank you," said Mary; and then she and Gingerita crossed the street and knocked at the other door. At last they felt that they were on the right track to find Mrs. Kingle.

As they stood waiting for the door of the flowered house to be opened Mary looked back and saw the wooden doll was still standing there with her arm outstretched, as though she had forgotten to put it down again.

Other dolls had appeared at other doll

house windows up and down the street, and were looking out at them; wax dolls with flaxen curls and rosy cheeks, who winked sharply now and then; china dolls, clean and shining, and plaster-headed dolls with stuffed bodies that rested limply against the window-panes.

"You 'd better knock again," said Gingerita, after she and Mary had been waiting some little time without any answer to their first rap.

Mary struck the door again, and now a soft cottony voice inside called "Come in."

The little girl pushed the door open and went in, followed closely by Gingerita.

At one side of the room which they entered an old, old looking rag doll was sitting in a stuffed chair before a round, black, tin stove. Her feet rested on a mat in the shape of a cat cut out of black cloth, and having bead eyes.

"What do you want?" asked the

rag mother; "and how did you come here, human child?"

"I came through the door where the little brook comes, and what I want is to find the house of Kris Kingle's grandmother," said Mary.

The rag mother scowled, and then leaned forward and peered sharply at Mary. "So that is it," she said. "You want to find Mrs. Kingle, do you? Don't you know there is not a toy in Wonderland who can show you the way there?"

"They told me that there was one toy that could show me the way," said Mary, "and that that was the Christmas Angel. They told me, too, that you could tell me where to find him."

The rag mother nodded with a strange look on her face, and for a moment it seemed as though she were listening for something. Then she nodded again. "That is true," she said; "I can tell you easily enough where to find the Christ-

mas Angel, but the thing is *can* he show you the way to Mrs. Kingle's? But wait a bit."

Very slowly and limply the rag mother hobbled to the door, and opening it, she beckoned to the wooden doll who was still standing in the doorway of the house opposite.

While the wooden doll was crossing the street, the rag mother waited at the door, now and then casting a sharp glance around at Mary and Gingerita.

The two dolls held a whispered talk outside, and then the rag mother came back into the room, closing the door behind her.

"And so you want me to tell you where to find the Christmas Angel?" she said, as she sank back into her chair again and put her feet on the black cat.

"Yes, if you please," said Mary.

"Well, well! that will take some time," said the rag mother. "For first of all, I shall have to tell you who the

Christmas Angel is, and how he happens to be where he is. So now have patience and listen."

Then the rag mother began the story of the Christmas Angel.

Chapter Eight

The Rag Mother's Story

"THE Christmas Angel" — so the rag mother began — "is the angel who hangs on the topmost bough of the Christmas tree.

"He swings high above the candles with a golden crown on his head. His clothes are trimmed with gold, his feet are bare, and on his back are shining wings. Surely you must have seen him?"

"Oh, yes; I know. There was one on my Christmas tree last year," said Mary.

"Yes, I suppose so," said the rag mother, and her painted eyes looked red and fierce. "There are more of them than of any other toy, I suppose. Wretched, prying, tale-telling figures

they are, too. Now I suppose you could never guess why there is one on every tree, could you?"

"I suppose to look pretty," said Mary.

"Yes, that's what you might think," said the rag mother. "But not at all. That's what all the shining balls and cornucopias and other things are there for, — to look pretty. But not the Christmas Angel.

"Hanging from the topmost bough, he can see everything, and if anything goes wrong, — if the children are cross and fretful, if the toys let themselves break too easily, if the balls and pretty things don't shine as they ought, — all this the Christmas Angel tells to Kris Kingle's grandmother.

"But there was one angel (and he was the most beautiful of all) who never left the Wonder Country; not even to swing on the finest Christmas tree that ever was trimmed.

"Mrs. Kingle is very old and stiff, and

Kris Kingle has n't time to go about through Wonderland, so Mrs. Kingle kept that angel for her messenger. He used to go flying and peering about, and carrying the news of all that was going on back to Mrs. Kingle.

"Those were bad times for the toys. Not one of them dared to quarrel with another then, for if it did Mrs. Kingle was sure to hear of it. Not a toy dared be untidy or out of place, but all must be kept bright and clean and shining for the moment when Mrs. Kingle might call on it to go into the other world, — the child world."

"But did n't they want to go?" asked Mary. "I should have thought they 'd have liked it, for there the toys could play almost all the time, and they have the children to love them."

"They did like to go once," said the rag mother, "but that was long ago, when they all had to keep themselves bright and new, as I tell you, and that was when the Christmas Angel used to

fly about watching over the toys, and telling them how to behave."

"Does n't he fly about now?" asked Mary.

"No," said the rag mother; "and that is what I started to tell you about.

"Of all the dolls that ever lived here not one was so beautiful as the lovely Winona. She was so beautiful and smiling that Christmas after Christmas passed, and not a child could be found who had been good enough all through the year to have Winona given to her.

"But though Winona was so beautiful to look at she was very careless, and after a while she began to get scratched and worn. Some of her stitches had ripped, too, and instead of getting mended she let the sawdust run out; so that if any child had picked her up she would have found how limp and half stuffed she was.

"Now Winona was terribly afraid Mrs. Kingle would find this out, so

whenever the angel came to the doll house where she lived, she received him sitting in a chair like a queen on her throne, and she smiled so sweetly and talked so gayly that somehow the Christmas Angel never saw how scratched she was growing. And always when he would have talked to her about going to the child world, she talked to him of how beautiful he was, and how shining and bright; how much more wonderful than any other toy that ever was made.

"She told him this so often and so sweetly that after a while the Christmas Angel began to wonder if he really were as beautiful as she said.

"He had no way of telling, however, for all the toy mirrors were in the second stories of the doll houses, and there were no stairs. The only way to get to them was to unlock the fronts of the houses and open them.

"This was forbidden, though. Mrs. Kingle kept the keys, and only when a

doll house was sent out into the child world was the key sent with it that it might be unlocked there.

"And now listen to what the Christmas Angel did.

"The beautiful Winona talked and talked to him until at last he consented to do that which was forbidden. He took the key of a doll house when Mrs. Kingle was asleep, and hid it under his tunic.

"Then he spread his wings and flew here to the Doll City as fast as they would carry him.

"Here the beautiful Winona was waiting for him. He showed her the key he had brought, and the moment she saw it, she knew that it was the key belonging to her very own house.

"She told him this, and he flew up and put the key in the keyhole. He turned it, and then he and Winona pushed together, and in a moment the whole front of the doll house swung open, and he was free to enter the upper story."

"And then what happened?" asked Mary, breathlessly, as the rag mother paused.

"And then," the rag mother went on, "after he had gone in and was looking at himself in the mirror, Winona pushed the front of the house shut, and there she had the Christmas Angel fastened in. There he was, a prisoner, never to escape again; never again to fly about the Wonder Country on his golden wings, warning and helping the toys, and carrying news of them to Kris Kingle's grandmother."

"But why didn't he push the front open and fly out again?" asked Mary.

"He couldn't; it was too heavy for him. It took two to move it. Winona herself could not have closed it after him, only she had a friend to help her."

"Who was her friend?" asked Mary.

"Her friend," said the rag mother, "was the very doll, yellow-faced and wooden, who pointed you the way to my house."

"And Winona?" asked Mary, not quite knowing why she all at once felt so afraid.

"Winona!" cried the rag mother, suddenly rising and waving her arms, "Winona you see before you. I — I —, the old rag mother, am the one time beautiful Winona, and in the story above, the Christmas Angel is a prisoner."

"Oh, come, come, Gingerita," cried Mary. "I don't like it here. I 'm afraid," and she ran to the door and tried to open it.

The rag mother dropped back into her chair, chuckling in her toothless, cottony voice.

"No, no," she cried. "Do you think I would have told you all this if there had been any chance of your getting away to carry the story to Mrs. Kingle? Oh, no! here you are, and here you may stay. The dolls have taken care of that, for while we have been talking, they have fastened the door on the

"'Winona,' cried the rag mother, suddenly rising and waving her arms."

outside so carefully that you can never open it.

You may beat and rattle as much as you will,
The doll house door will stay fastened still."

"No, no; I must get out," cried Mary, pulling with all her strength at the door, while Gingerita beat upon it with her gingerbread hands; but the door was fastened too tightly for them to move it. They were, indeed, prisoners in the doll house, shut in there with the pitiless rag mother.

Chapter Nine

The Escape

GINGERITA sat on a stool in a corner with her face hidden in her hands. She was weeping sugary tears.

Mary was not crying. She stood by the window, looking out, and her brows were drawn together in a frown. She was not only frightened; she was angry, too. After all, the rag mother was nothing but a doll.

Suddenly Mary turned her head and listened. Somewhere overhead, in the second story of the doll house, a voice began to sing very softly, but so sweetly and sadly that it made the little girl feel like crying: —

"Long, long ago my wings I spread;
Through Wonderland I lightly sped,
Past fields where pies and doughnuts grew,
And sugar-plums and puddings too.

"The toys below looked up at me;
How bright and neat they were to see!
In painted joy they watched below,
So long ago; so long ago.

"But now the toys grow scratched and worn,
While I a prisoner sit forlorn,
And tarnished now are my golden wings
Because I looked on forbidden things."

The rag mother looked at the children and chuckled to herself, her rag head wagging from side to side. "Do you hear the Christmas Angel singing?" she said. "Yes, now you know where he is." Then raising her voice so that the angel might hear, she cried, "Sing away, my beautiful angel; it will be long enough before your golden wings will have a chance to carry you about the Wonder Country again. As for me, there is nothing so soothing as your complaints. Sing again, and your voice shall lull me to sleep."

As if in answer to what she said, the voice above took up the song once more:

"Alack-a-day! Alack-a-day!
My fault was great, — to disobey.
Betray my trust when I was sent!
But I repent. Oh, I repent."

The rag mother's head drooped to one side, and her eyes closed in sleep. "So you repent," she muttered to herself.

Again the soft, sad voice overhead sang: —

"Alas, alas! and woe is me!
Will no one help to set me free?
With all my strength I strive in vain
To push the house front out again."

Deeper and deeper grew the sleep of the old rag mother, and soon she was snoring as though she would never awaken.

"Gingerita," whispered Mary, "do you see that the rag mother is asleep?"

"Yes, I see," said the gingerbread girl.

"Then tell me," said Mary, "why should n't we push the front of the house back, for there are two of us, and

if the Christmas Angel pushed above, I 'm sure we could do it."

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Gingerita, eagerly. "And then we could escape; and more than that, we could get the angel to show us the way to Mrs. Kingle's house, for the rag mother said he knew it."

"Hush!" whispered Mary; "do not speak so loudly;" for the rag mother had stirred and muttered in her sleep.

Suddenly some rhymes flashed into Mary's mind, and she sang them softly and soothingly, as the Christmas Angel had sung: —

"The old rag mother is snoring deep;
Her eyes are shut; she is fast asleep.
Christmas Angel, listen to me;
There are two below who would set you free."

There was silence above, as Mary ended, as though the Christmas Angel were listening eagerly. After a moment, as Mary was still silent, the angel above answered: —

"Who sings below, so sweet and clear,
Promising help to the prisoner here?"

"A child from the real world, far away,
And a gingerbread girl who was baked to-day,"

answered Mary.

The angel sang again: —

"O Child and gingerbread girl, I hear;
If I once am free there will be no fear.
But lightly move, and softly creep,
Lest the rag mother wake too soon from sleep.
On the front of the house push hard, and see
How the whole in a moment will all swing free."

Now very softly, and on tiptoes, so as not to awaken the rag mother, Mary and the gingerbread girl stole to the front of the house.

They leaned their shoulders against it, and pushed, but it did not stir. Again they pushed, and it seemed to Mary that it moved a little. Once more, and now, slowly and silently, the whole front of the doll house swung open, and they could see the street, the

sky, the houses opposite all lying still and deserted, with not a toy in sight.

The rag mother was still asleep, and Mary and Gingerita stepped softly through the opening, and were free once more.

"But where is the Christmas Angel?" whispered Gingerita.

Hardly had she spoken when there was a soft rustling of wings, and floating down from the story above, as lightly as a feather, came the Christmas Angel. He was more beautiful than anything Mary had ever seen before. His eyes were as blue as the sky, his hair was in golden curls all over his head, and his cheeks and lips were rosy. But though his face was so bright and beautiful, it was sad as well.

Silently he beckoned to Mary and Gingerita, and led them down the lonely street, and out into the country beyond.

There he turned to them and spoke. "You have set me free," he said, "and now I must hasten back to the house

of Mrs. Kingle; but before I go, ask of me what you will, and if the Christmas Angel can grant it, it is yours."

"Oh, dear Angel," cried Mary, clasping her hands, "take us with you. Let us go with you to Mrs. Kingle's house; we have been wandering through Wonderland so long, trying to find it."

"To Mrs. Kingle's house!" repeated the angel, looking at her with surprise. "Now what can you want there? But never mind," he added. "I have promised to grant your wish, if I could, so come with me, and I will show you the way."

So saying, the angel turned his face from the Doll City and set out walking steadily across the country toward a shining river, that they could just see in the distance, and with him, side by side, went Mary and the gingerbread girl.

Chapter Ten

The Pursuit

FROM the upper story of the doll house the Christmas Angel had brought with him a dark cloak, and this he had thrown around him before they began their journey. His wings and his shining tunic were quite hidden. He walked on in silence, with drooping head, and though Mary often glanced sideways toward him, neither she nor Gingerita dared to break that silence.

At last they drew near to the river, that they had already seen from the distance. It lay before them as smooth and shining as though a piece of looking-glass had been fitted in between the meadows on either hand.

On the edge of this stream stood a great wooden house-boat, with the roof

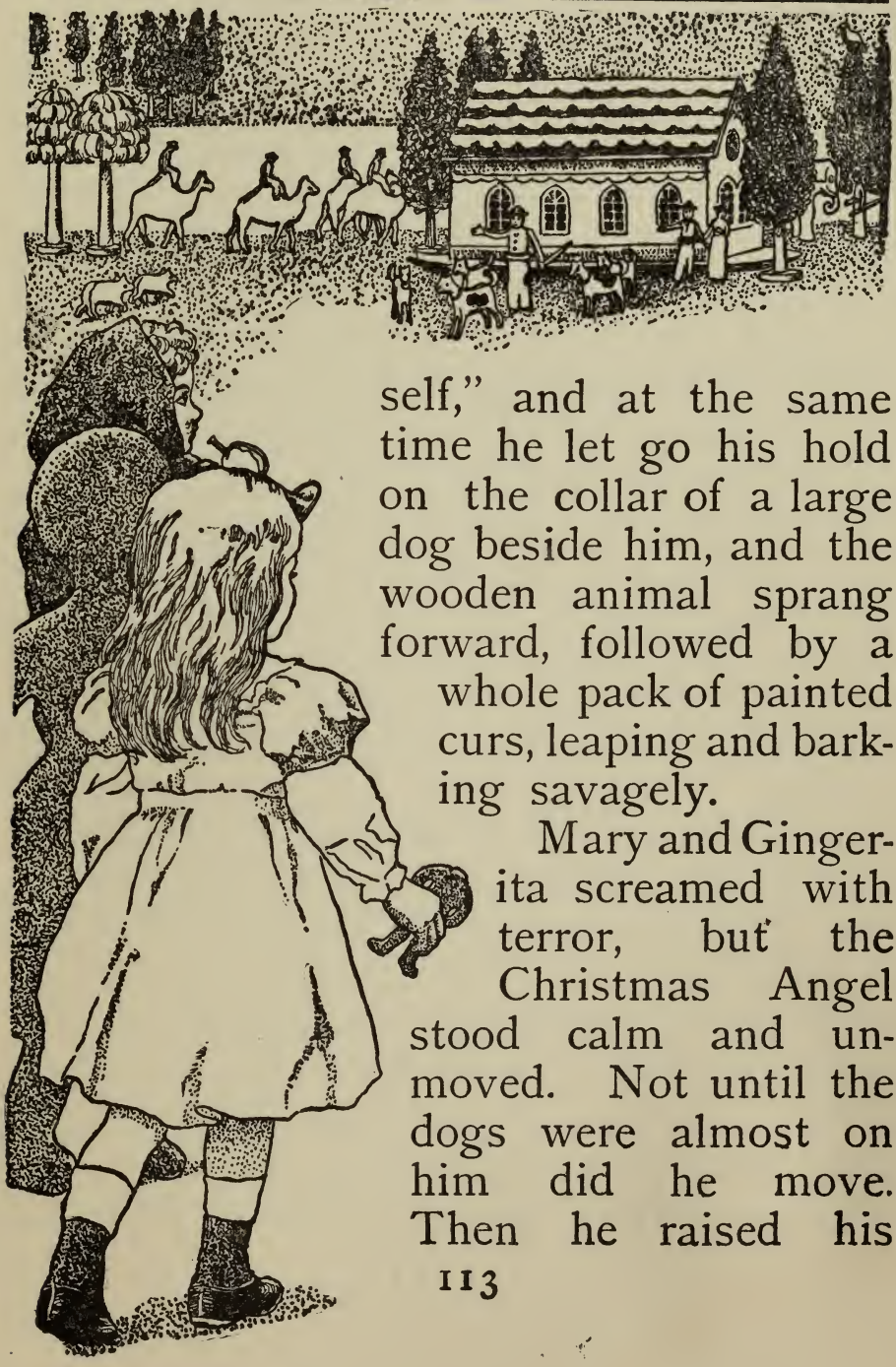
painted in scalloped strips, and having rows of black windows on either side of it. It did not need a second look to tell Mary that it was a Noah's Ark.

Sitting in the shade of it, or walking about, were Mr. and Mrs. Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their wives. Mary recognized them by their straight, stiff dresses, and by the round, black hats they wore.

The wooden figures stopped talking, and stood staring hard at the children and the angel. Presently, Noah began motioning to them not to come any nearer, and as soon as they were within hailing distance he shouted: "Go away! Go away! Don't come here. We have heard about you from the farmers. Go away, or we will set the dogs on you."

Mary and Gingerita hesitated, but the Christmas Angel walked calmly on without paying any heed to their shouts.

"I warn you not to come any nearer," cried Noah; and as the angel still walked on he shouted, "Then take care of your-



self," and at the same time he let go his hold on the collar of a large dog beside him, and the wooden animal sprang forward, followed by a whole pack of painted curs, leaping and barking savagely.

Mary and Gingerita screamed with terror, but the Christmas Angel stood calm and unmoved. Not until the dogs were almost on him did he move. Then he raised his

hand. "Down! Down!" he said sternly, but quietly.

At the sound of his voice the dogs all stopped short, crouching down with low whines, while the largest and fiercest of them crept humbly to the angel and licked his foot. The others sneaked back to the Noah's Ark, cringing and trembling. It was in vain that Noah tried to urge them on. They only crouched the lower, whining with fear.

"What have you done to my dogs?" cried Noah, furiously. "Away with you, or else we will shut you all up in the Ark, and then you may look for help in vain."

"No need of that," cried Mrs. Noah. "Look! There comes the rag mother, and all the dolls are with her. She will see that they go no farther."

Mary and Gingerita hastily looked behind them, and there, sure enough, they saw hastening after them a great crowd of enraged dolls; and at their head, her silk frock bellying in the wind,

her arms waving wildly, came the rag mother herself.

"Alas! we are lost!" cried Gingerita; but Mary motioned to her to be quiet. The little girl was looking at the Christmas Angel, who stood there unmoved among all the noise.

And now the crowd of dolls was close upon them. "Come back! Come back!" cried the rag mother. "Never think to escape us in this way." And all the dolls echoed in a confused hubbub, "Come back!"

They were close upon the children now, with angry faces and wild gestures.

Suddenly the angel threw aside his cloak, and stood before them in all his brightness and beauty. Instantly, as if by magic, every sound ceased. Then from among the dolls and the wooden figures arose a low wail. "The Christmas Angel!" they cried.

The rag mother sank on her knees as though her cotton legs had failed

under her. "Mercy! Oh, have mercy on me, Christmas Angel!" she cried.

The Christmas Angel looked at her sadly. "I have as much need of mercy as you, Winona," he said. "It lies with Mrs. Kingle to say what our punishment shall be."

Then he turned from the moaning rag mother to Noah. "As for you," he said, "make the Ark ready, for it is in it that we will sail up the river to Mrs. Kingle's house."

And now what a change there was in the wooden figures! Swiftly and silently, with few words, and those whispered, they gathered the animals together and herded them into the Ark. The lid was closed and latched, the Ark pushed out on the smooth river, and they were ready to start.

The angel beckoned to Mary and Gingerita, and they followed him on to the pointed piece of wood that stuck out at the back of the Ark. Noah and the other wooden figures stepped on the

front of it. Then the Ark was pushed off from the shore, and in a moment they were sailing smoothly away up the river, while the dolls stood staring after them from the shore, a melancholy group.

Chapter Eleven

Kris Kingle's Grandmother

AS smoothly as in a dream, the Ark sailed up the looking-glass river. There was no faintest ripple to mark its course.

On and on they went, and at last the angel showed the Noah's Ark people a small, sandy cove where he wished them to bring the Ark to land. "We shall have to walk the rest of the way," he said to the children.

With eager obedience the wooden figures brought the Ark to shore, and held it there while the angel and the children stepped off.

As the three went on their way, and just before a little hill hid the river from sight, Mary looked back and saw the Ark still lying there, and the people from it gazing after them, — a quaint

crowd, in their straight clothes and round hats.

Before long the angel paused a moment and pointed to where a red chimney just showed above a clump of trees. "Look!" he said to Mary, "there is Mrs. Kingle's house;" and his voice trembled as he spoke.

As they came nearer, Mary could see what a pretty little house it was, with a flower-garden about it so full of white blossoms that it looked as though the paths led among banks of snow; there were trees too, glittering with glass fruit, or balls of gold and silver.

The angel walked up between the beds of white flowers and knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried a bluff, hearty voice in answer to the knock, and the Christmas Angel opened the door and stepped across the threshold, followed closely by the children.

Within the room which they entered, a fat little man with a beard and a

pointed cap was seated at the window, smoking a pipe.

Mary had no time to see what the little man looked like, for no sooner had he clapped eyes on her than he fell out of his chair as though he had been shot. Across the floor he scrambled, and tearing open the lower door of the dresser, he threw himself in among the pots and pans, and banged it to behind him.

"Go away," he shouted from behind the door. "You must n't see me; go right away;" and then there was a great banging and clattering inside the dresser, as though he had upset a whole pile of tin pots and pans.

"What 's the matter?" Mary asked of the Christmas Angel.

"Oh, nothing," said the angel. "It 's only Kris Kingle. He 's so shy he can't bear to have any human child see him. Come! We 'll go upstairs to where Mrs. Kingle is; he 'll come out again as soon as you 've gone."

Mary was very glad to leave, for from inside the dresser came a sharp exclamation from Kris and then another crash. The little girl was anxious to give him a chance to get out before he upset anything more.

The angel now led the children up a crooked stairway, and along a narrow entry to another door, where he once more knocked.

"Come in," called some one inside. The angel opened the door, and Mary stood at last in the presence of Kris Kingle's grandmother.

She was very old. Mary could tell that from her snow-white hair, and from her face, which was as seamed with wrinkles as a walnut. She wore a white cap and a kerchief, and upon her nose was a huge pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. From over these spectacles she looked at the angel and his companions, with eyes as blue as the sky, and as sharp as pin points.

"And so you have returned at

last?" she said to the angel, very quietly.

"Yes, I have come back at last," he made answer.

"No need to ask where you have been," said Mrs. Kingle, "for I know well which key it is that is missing from my bunch. I know of your disobedience, and of its punishment, too. But tell me, who are these children who have come with you through Wonderland?"

"These are the human child and the gingerbread girl, who set me free," said the Christmas Angel. "And because they asked as a reward for their service that I should show them the way to you, I have brought them here."

The old woman turned to Mary and Gingerita with a kindly look. "Why did you wish to find me, my children?" she asked.

Then very eagerly Mary and Gingerita told Mrs. Kingle their stories. Mary told her of how lonely she had always been with no one to play with; of her

"'*And so you have returned at last,' she said to the Angel.*"

Aunt Josephine's story of the live toys; and of how she had journeyed all this way to find Mrs. Kingle and to beg for a toy that would stay alive and be company for her.

She told, too, of how the toys had tried to keep her a prisoner on the way, and of how she had escaped from them.

Mrs. Kingle nodded. "Yes, yes," she said. "They were afraid that if you found me, you would tell me of their wrong-doings; as if I did not know it already better than any one can tell it!"

Then it was Gingerita's turn, and her story was of her coming alive, and finding her little brother's head broken off, and of her hopes that Mrs. Kingle would mend him so he might come alive too.

Mrs. Kingle took the gingerbread boy from Mary, and laid him and his head on the table beside her. "That is easily done," she said. "I promise you I will mend him so well that you can never see where he has been broken; and he shall come alive to play with you about

the fields of Wonderland. But about the live toy; that is not such a simple matter. Tell me," she went on, turning to the Christmas Angel, "what do you think the child deserves who freed my messenger, and travelled through such dangers to find me?"

"She deserves to have her wish," said the angel.

"And she shall have it," cried Mrs. Kingle, in a clear, silvery voice. "Next Christmas, in the morning, the live toy shall come to her as a free gift, and that live toy shall be the Christmas Angel himself."

Mary gave a cry of surprise and joy, but the angel, springing forward, kneeled before Mrs. Kingle, and caught a fold of her dress in his hand.

"Oh," he cried, "will you send your poor messenger from you? Was my fault so great that you can no longer give me any love?"

"I love you as dearly as ever, my poor Angel," said Mrs. Kingle, gently,

"but much as I love you, you have broken the laws of Wonderland, and he who breaks its laws can never again be my messenger." She was silent a moment, and then she spoke again. "Be of a brave heart, my Angel: for know this; sweet as the pleasures are in Wonderland, no one here can ever know such joys as those of the child world beyond."

Again there was silence in the room.

The Angel had risen now, and stood before Mrs. Kingle with clasped hands.

Mary touched him timidly on the arm. "Will you truly come?" she asked.

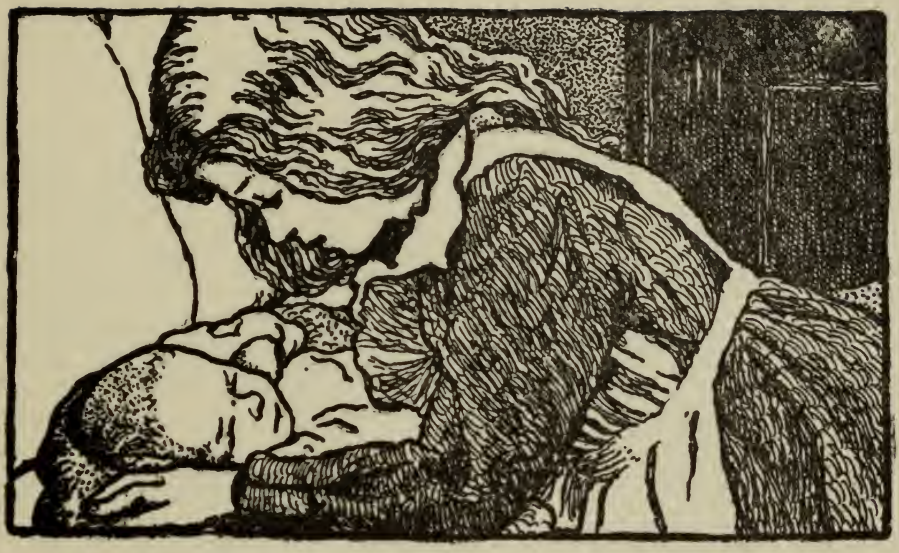
The Angel bent his head. "Yes, I will come. I will come as the grandmother has bade me, as your Christmas gift," he said.

Suddenly it seemed to Mary as though a mist were rising between her and the room where she stood. Dimly now, as in a dream, she saw Mrs. Kingle, the gingerbread girl, and the Christmas Angel with his beautiful shining head.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried. "I don't seem to see you very well."

"No, my child," said Mrs. Kingle, and her voice sounded faint and far away. "You must go back now. You will have your wish answered, but you can no longer stay in Wonderland. Farewell! Farewell, my child."

And Gingerita waved her gingerbread hand (Mary could only just see her now) and echoed tearfully, "Farewell! Farewell!"



Chapter Twelve

The Christmas Angel

MARY opened her eyes and looked about her.

She was lying in the great wide bed in her mother's room. The room was very dim and still, and on the table beside the bed stood a number of bottles, and a covered tumbler with a spoon resting across it.

The change from Mrs. Kingle's house to that familiar room was so sudden and strange that Mary lay perfectly still for

some moments, trying to recollect herself. Then she turned her head on the pillow.

Immediately, slight as was the noise she made in moving, Aunt Josephine appeared at the bedside and bent over the child anxiously.

"How did I get here?" asked Mary, and her voice sounded strangely weak and far-away.

"Hus-s-sh!" murmured Aunt Josephine softly. "Take this;" and she held a teaspoonful of the liquid from the tumbler to Mary's lips.

The child swallowed it obediently, and then a pleasant drowsiness and feeling of rest stole over her. Her senses went drifting off into dreamland, where great golden clouds loomed up like castles. There the gingerbread boy stood on his head on a rice pudding and asked her confidentially, "Which is better, to be as you are or to see as you don't?" In her dream that really seemed to Mary to be a very sensible question.

When Mary woke again the daylight was gone. A dim night-light was burning behind a screen, and her mother sat in a great arm-chair at the foot of the bed.

"Mamma," said the child, in her weak voice.

"What is it, my darling?" asked her mother, coming to the head of the bed and laying a cool, light hand on the child's forehead

"How did I get here?" whispered Mary.

"Papa carried you here."

"Papa," cried the little girl with surprise. "Did papa come to Wonderland?"

"There, there," said her mother soothingly; "we won't talk about that now, my dearest. You have been ill, and the doctor says you must be very still and not try to talk;" and then she stole back to her place at the foot of the bed.

Mary lay there wondering for a while, but she felt too weak to even wonder

for very long, and presently she drifted off again into the land of dreams.

And very like a dream the next few days of real life seemed to Mary. Sometimes she was awake and sometimes asleep, but the room was always kept dim and quiet, and people stole about with noiseless tread.

Gradually she learned how very ill she had been; so ill that they had been obliged to cut off all her pretty hair, and someone had been sitting up with her every night.

It was some time before they would let the little girl talk to them about her adventures in Wonderland, for they feared it would excite her.

When she was well enough to tell them, however, her mother listened to the story with a smile. Then, after the tale was ended, she told the little girl, very gently and tenderly, that all that had been but a fever dream.

"You have not really been to Wonderland, my little girl," she said. "It was

only a dream. You have really been lying here in the bed all that time, with Aunt Josephine and me watching beside you."

Then Mary's mother went on to tell the little girl that the afternoon of her tea-party in the cave she had not come home, and at last her father had grown so anxious about her that he had set off with John, the coachman, to look for her.

Her mother told her of how they had hunted here and there, and at last had followed up the brook, and had found her lying insensible at the foot of the beech-tree where she had fallen.

"You had struck your head against a rock when you fell," she said, "and that made you very, very ill. When people are ill they often fancy strange things, and so you fancied that you were wandering in Wonderland and finding the grandmother of Kris Kingle and the beautiful Christmas Angel, but all the time you were really here in bed."

Mary cried with disappointment at the thought that all her adventures had been a dream, and that the Christmas Angel was not coming, after all, to live with her and be her beautiful live toy.

And yet — and yet — how real it had all seemed! It was hard to believe that her mother was right and that it had been but a fever dream.

So the summer waned, and autumn passed away. Mary grew quite strong again. Her hair came out all over her head in soft, sunny brown curls, and her cheeks grew as red as apples. Then came winter, with its bare trees and frozen meadows.

All the little children were writing out lists of what they wanted at Christmas time and sending them to Kris Kingle.

Mary, too, wrote out a list, and Aunt Josephine helped her to post it between two bricks in the fireplace.

But there was another letter that Mary printed all by herself with careful pains, — a letter that she showed to no one.

This letter was addressed to Mrs. Kingle, and here is what it said: —

Dear Mrs. Kingle, —

I hope you are really true. I hope you will remember to send me a live toy. I thought I found you. Mamma says I did n't. I 'm just as lonely as I was. I 'd like the live toy best. You need not mind the other things, and I hope you are true. You said you would.

Your little friend,

Mary Greyson.

Christmas morning came, and bright and early Mary was astir. Her nurse was so long about coming that she dressed herself in the early grayness. The buttons of her shoes were not all fastened and her dress was on awry, but that did not matter.

No one else was astir as she ran with eager hopes across the entry to the nursery and pushed open the door.

There between the windows stood the Christmas tree. From the mantel hung her stocking, bulging with good things,

and on the window-seat were the most beautiful presents of toys and books, — just what she had asked for in her list.

But there was no live toy, and now Mary knew indeed that her visit to the Wonder Country had been all a dream.

For a moment she felt ready to cry with disappointment, and then, as she began to look at the gifts and to see how fine they were, she forgot for the moment.

While she was looking at them a gay voice behind her cried, "Christmas gift!" It was Aunt Josephine.

"Oh, auntie, look!" cried Mary; "is n't this a beautiful book? Just what I wanted. And look at my sled. Oh, I wish it would snow!" Aunt Josephine looked on, smiling at the child's excitement and pleasure.

After a while Mary asked with some surprise, "Is n't mamma up yet?"

"No," said Aunt Josephine, "not yet."

And then she added, "Now that you have looked at all your other gifts, I want you to come over to the West room and see another Christmas present that is there for you."

"What is it?" asked Mary. But Aunt Josephine would not tell her.

She led the little girl over to the West room, and there she paused with her hand on the knob of the door. "You must be very quiet," she said.

"Yes, I will," promised Mary, her heart beginning to beat a little faster with curiosity and something like fear; Aunt Josephine's face looked serious, and yet happy too.

Very softly the aunt opened the door and led the little girl in.

The curtains were drawn half down, and on the wide, white bed something was lying; something covered with a pretty pink and white afghan that Aunt Josephine had knitted in the fall.

A tidy, elderly woman, with a white cap and apron, was busy at the table.

She looked over her shoulder and smiled at the little girl.

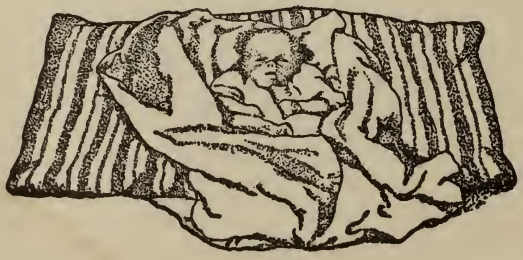
Aunt Josephine led Mary over to the bed and lifted one corner of the afghan.

The child gave a gasp and a little cry. Under the afghan lay the tiniest baby she had ever seen. It had a little red face, and tiny crumpled red hands. Its eyes were shut, and it was fast asleep.

"Oh! Oh!" cried Mary. It was all that she could say.

"Hush!" whispered Aunt Josephine. "This is your Christmas gift; a little brother."

Just then the baby opened his eyes and looked straight at Mary. They were blue eyes with dark lashes, and as he looked at her, the little girl knew him, changed as he was, as the Christmas Angel from the Wonder Country.



BOOKS
THE BEST COMPANIONS
L
B
C

Books by Katharine Pyle

THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

With 6 full-page plates and 14 decorative headings, etc., by the Author. $1.20 net.

A CHARMING story of Kris Kringle and the Wonder Country where all the toys are alive. A little girl finds a door in a tree, and opening it with a tiny key, discovers that it leads to "Toyland." In this "Wonder-Country" she has many adventures.

A really delightful Christmas book, teeming with marvellous adventures.—*The Outlook.*

AS THE GOOSE FLIES

Fully Illustrated by the Author. 12mo. $1.20 net.

A pretty fairy story of a little girl who, on the back of a great white gander, visits Mother Goose land and fairy land and talks and plays with all her favorites there.—*Public Opinion.*

IN THE GREEN FOREST

Fully Illustrated by the Author. 8vo. $1.20 net.

The book is full of pretty, delicate fancies, pleasingly told, with the right spirit of fairy magic and mystery.—*Philadelphia Telegraph.*

NANCY RUTLEDGE

With 6 full-page illustrations by the Author. 12mo. $1.20 net.

Nancy is a dear little maid, and the story of how she moved to town and all the things she did there is told with charming simplicity. — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

Little, Brown, & Co., *Publishers*

84 Beacon Street, Boston

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
31197 20184 4542